Daoist Internal Mastery



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Translated by Mark Bartosh

Edited by Livia Kohn

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Contents

Acknowledgments v
Preface vi

1. The Dragon Gate Lineage of Immortals 1
   Dragon Gate Transmission 1
   Dao, Daoism, and Other Religions 3
   Daoist Schools 8
   The Patriarchs 13
   The Arts of Immortality 15

2. *Neigong shu* Overview 18
   The Nine Main Methods 19
   The Nine Additional Methods 28
   The Internal Landscape 29

3A. Internal Structure 35
   The Heavenly Circuit 35
   The Three Energies in the Body 37
   Spirit and the Life Force 47
   Spirit Light 54
   Emotions, Desires, and Senses 57
   The Three Perfect Spaces 59
   The Three Centers 63

3B. Cultivation System 72
   Forms of Breathing 72
   Sitting Meditation 78
   Hand Seals and Gestures 82
   Retreats and Fasting 86
   The Three Forms of *Qi* and their Movements 98
   How to Meditate 102
   Elixir Concoction: External and Internal 105
   Refinement Procedures 109

4. Exchanging *Qi* with Nature 112
   The First Technique 113
   Things to Note 116
   Application 118
   Cultivation Process 120

5. Energy Balancing 123
Stationary Tree Practice 123
Working with Movement 129
Theory and Origin 139

6. Pacing and Ball Practice 137
Pacing the Seven Stars 137
Pacing the Eight Trigrams 140
Intention Ball Exercises 143
Level Two Practices 144

7. Opening Vessels and Meridians 147

8. Standing Practice 152

9. Sleep Practice 155

10. Capturing Solar Essence and Lunar Florescences 162
Absorbing Lunar Florescence 163
Absorbing Solar Essence 169

11. Attaining Wisdom and Potential 175

12. Refining the Internal Lines 177

13A. Attracting Immortality 179
Theory of Attracting Immortality 182
The Twelve Methods 184
1st Method: Focusing the Heart-and-Mind in Sitting Meditation 184
2nd Method: Stabilizing the Body 193
3rd Method: No Seeing, No Hearing 199
4th Method: Containing Seeing and Reversing Hearing 203
5th Method: Steadying Ordinary Respiration 206
6th Method: Calming Spirit in Three Steps 208
7th Method: Steadying Perfect Breathing 210
8th Method: Stopping All Leakage 214
9th Method: Looking Inward and Reversing Hearing 215
10th Method: Concentrating Spirit in Serene Reflection 216
11th Method: Listening to and Following the Breath 218
12th Method: Nurturing and Cleansing the Heart-and-Mind 220

13B. Explanation of Attracting Immortality 223
Foundation 223
Basic Steps 226
Perfect Oneness 230
The Lower Field 234
Internal Space 229

Effects 241
The New Universe 245

14A. The Cultivation Methods of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* 251
Strongly Open the Heavenly Eye 252
Calm Spirit at the Ancestral Orifice 269
Focus Spirit in the Cavity of *Qi* 276
Turn Your Vision Inward 281

14B. Explanation of the Cultivation Methods 288
Spiritual Seeing 294
Key Caverns in the Body 299
The Spirit Light 304
Calming the Spirit 310
Cosmological Implications 315
Practical Application 321

15A. Alignment of the Five Phases 325
Single Alignment 326
Alignment of All Five Phases, Part 1 328
Alignment of All Five Phases, Part 2 333
Alignment of All Five Phases, Part 3 335
The Five Phases in the Body 337
The Structure of the Five Phases 346

15B. Explanation of the Alignment of the Five Phases 353
Traditional Patterns 357
Organ Connections 362

16. Augmenting Yang Fire and Reducing Yin Impact 367

17. Ways of Inner Observation 374

18. Contemplating Teachers and Parents 382

19. Midnight Practice 387

20. Essential Methods of Women's Alchemy 392

21. The Practice of the Three Immortals 398

Glossary 403
Index 413

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Overall, the translation took over five years to complete, requiring many hours away from my wife and three daughters. Without question, the most elementary, rock-steady, and unfailing care and support during these years came from my loving wife, Stephanie. Raised in Taiwan and fluent in Mandarin, she is also a student of Master Wang. She helped me solve many questions and was a source of ongoing conversation about the text—all this while we were opening the first Mandarin Immersion Montessori School in New York City. She has been a constant pillar of strength, forever at my side, always having my back, as I kept on struggling with the translation. I am fortunate to have such an amazing partner in life. Thank you so very, very much!

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—Mark Bartosh

Preface

This book translates Master Wang's original practice instructions and discourses. I originally obtained his work in December 2011, when I sat my first retreat with him in Dalian, China. At the time I could not read a single word of Chinese, and so the book held many mysteries. As I delved into it, I would ask my wife, Stephanie, to render some sections for me, but she found it hard since the work is a technical manual, filled with terms and ideas that are challenging to translate. So she soon tired of my requests, and I set out to start my own rendition. I began very literally, going word by word, then managed to read entire sentences. Wow! That was great!

Since then, over five years have passed, an ongoing and challenging journey that led to this version. It fills me with great joy to make it finally available to the English speaking world. My hope is that the book will inspire readers to commence or intensify their practice of Daoist cultivation, thereby to enhance vibrant health and open spiritual awakening.

I have endeavored to translate the work as closely as possible to the original while utilizing the standard terms used by scholars of Daoist studies. The book presents a coherent system, but its practices should be undertaken under the direction of a qualified master. Thus, during Master Wang's retreats, participants spend almost all their time in meditation practice guided and mentored by his direct instructions. The bulk of the learning happens in these sittings because the alchemical instructions are so many and so complex.

The mind plays a part at first, serving to direct the process, but ultimately the work happens through the body. The body has its own inherent wisdom: to unlock it, practitioners undertake various sets of internal exercises. The process then allows them to experience the full fruition of the medicine the system provides. The book provides detailed explanations and explained theories on these practices; however, it does not give the tempo, the rhythm, the firing process necessary to concoct the internal medicine. Therefore, it provides support but does not, and cannot, replace Master Wang's personal guidance.

This book aims to elucidate and explicate the depth of Daoist practice. I personally spent over twenty years studying under the late Dr. Samuel Sagan, founder of the Clairvision School of Meditation. I worked hard to open my energy body and consciousness in those years, a feat that prepared me to receive Master Wang's teachings in their fullness. Without this preparatory work, I believe, I would not have been able to absorb the experiences and transformations central to Master Wang's teaching anywhere as deeply. Master Wang's system is as vast as the ocean: it is a gift that keeps on giving! To really benefit

from the book and its teachings, by all means, everyone should attend his seminars and experience them firsthand.

To obtain a bilingual version of the book in English and Chinese, please visit www.daoistinternalmastery.com for more information.

—Mark Bartosh New York, November 2018

Chapter One

The Dragon Gate Lineage of Immortals

Dragon Gate Transmission

Qiu Chuji founded the Dragon Gate (Longmen) lineage during the Jin dynasty (1148-1227). Also known as Brother Qiu, he was a native of Qixia in Dengzhou (modern Shandong). A disciple of Wang Chongyang (1113-1170), the founder of the school of Complete Perfection or Reality (Quanzhen), he was given the Daoist name Changchunzi (Master of Eternal Spring).

After Wang's death, he as well as the other leading disciples, Ma Yu, Tan Chuxuan, and Liu Chuxuan gathered together for his funeral. Following this, Qiu practiced Daoist cultivation in a grave for three years, then moved to a cave in Panxi, where he continued his efforts for six years without sleeping. From here, he moved to the Longmen range (Shaanxi). He attracted many followers through his ascetic lifestyle while also winning the admiration of scholars through his literary work. His long-term practice gave him the appearance and perseverance of an immortal. In his later years, Qiu gained the favor of Genghis Khan who conferred a gold tablet and a royal seal upon him, in addition to granting tax-exempt status to all Complete Perfection followers and placing Qiu in charge of all religions in China. Thus, the Dragon Gate lineage was founded. Qiu spent almost his entire life promoting this form of Daoism.

The Yuan emperor Kublai Khan bestowed on Qiu the title "Perfected of Eternal Spring, Daoist Preacher and Leader;" Külüg Khan in addition named him "Perfected Lord of Eternal Spring, Master of Complete Virtue, Spirit Transformation and Illuminated Response."

The Qianlong Emperor of the Qing dynasty had a quote of his formally inscribed: "To live an eternal life of a myriad years, there is no need to eat the morning clouds or seek out fancy chants. Just stop all killing and you will know how to go beyond the world and attain miraculous achievements."

During his life, Patriarch Qiu wrote numerous works, including the *Panxi ji* (Collected Essays from Pan Stream; DZ 1159),[1] *Mingdao ji* (Essays on Advo-

[1] DZ refers to *Daozang*, the Daoist Canon, compiled and printed in 1445 under imperial auspices. It contains about 1500 texts of various types. The numbering follows Kristofer M.

cating Dao) and *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West; DZ 1149).[2] Master Qiu taught many disciples, sponsored the establishment of numerous Daoist temples and left behind the Dragon Gate lineage poem, on which all religious names of followers are based. It goes:[3]

> Dao and virtue pervade mysterious stillness.
> True constancy guards supreme clarity.
> The one yang comes and returns to the source.
> The united teaching is forever whole and bright.
>
> Utmost principle is the ancestor of sincere and faith.
> Venerated and lofty, it transmits the flourishing of the divine law,
> The world's light is flourishing and utterly splendid.
> Inaudible and subtle, it spreads in its natural peacefulness.
>
> Rest in and cultivate true benevolence and righteousness.
> Then, going beyond all and ascending to the clouds,
> You can reach the heights.
> As you hold the central yellow in great wonder,
> Your sagely body is complete and marvelously efficient.
> In emptiness and vastness, heaven (Qian) and earth (Kun) flourish;
> Metal and wood engender each other by mutually coming together.
>
> Mountains and seas, dragon and tiger interact;
> The lotus opens and appears as a new treasure.
> When you practice fully, the cinnabar book [of immortality] beckons;
> When the moon is full, an auspicious light arises,
> For a myriad ages, immortals names continue,
> The Three Worlds all merge and become familiar.

Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[2] This work is in fact a record of his travels to meet Genghis Khan, by his disciple Yin Zhiping. It is translated Arthur Waley, *The Travels of an Alchemist* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1931).

[3] A translation with commentary and annotation by Fabrizio Pregadio is found at www.goldenelixir.com/files/The_Longmen_Lineage_Poem.pdf

Dao, Daoism, and Other Religions

Dao is an ancient Chinese philosophical concept. It encompasses the myriad phenomena and the natural universe is completely contained in Dao. Through exploration over thousands of years, our ancestors in China discovered Dao. Daoism and Confucianism both derive from this notion. The Daoist school, in particular, generated Daoism, China's indigenous religion. The Confucian school, on the other hand, does not teach religion, but provides an ethical teaching. Today, China embraces three doctrines: Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism.

While its teaching goes back to the thought of Confucius (550-479 BCE), how and when exactly Confucianism was established as a pan-Chinese system is not entirely clear, nor who really was the leader in this process. What influence did it have on the individual Chinese? What impact did it have on China as a whole and for how long? Those are still unanswered questions, especially also since Confucianism was widely accepted in imperial China but since the beginning of the Republic in 1912, has manifested in a much more narrow-minded version.

Daoist philosophy, on the other hand, clearly generated the Daoist religion and both are widely appreciated as representing the beliefs of the people, so that the foundation of the nation is closely connected with Dao and its system. Daoism is one way to study Dao, using your experience as empirical evidence. The Daoist religion serves to help us understand Dao; it came into being so we could properly understand Daoist thought. For many years, virtue was a key factor in empirically studying Dao, but eventually it became clear that virtue was not the same as religion.

All over world, religions teach about facing death. For example, Buddhism teaches that, as long as we live carefully and morally well, we will go to the Western Pure Land. Similarly, Christianity teaches people to live ethically and go to heaven after death. Daoism, however, does not emphasize the afterlife but strongly focuses on life in the present. It promotes longevity and immortality, presenting a special and highly unique view of life. Daoists want to live a long time, attain immortality and reach eternal life. Although this goal may not seem feasible, it has yet been explored by numerous Daoists over the ages. Is it possible for human beings to coexist with the universe? Can people survive after its destruction?

Questions like these determine the reason for meditation. They are not the same in different tradition and reflect various religious ideas and practices. Different techniques of meditation, moreover, match different basic questions and accordingly lead to different realizations. They all vary, depending on who or which nation is asking the questions. Daoism in this context is a way to inspect and understand Dao; it reflects Chinese indigenous culture. Basically, we

can say that Daoists are looking to find God, understood as the source and root of all things. Not having God as the basis is the same as having no root. So, what are Daoists trying to understand in the end? Their key focus is on correctly seeing the universe, the world, and life.

With regard to the universe, Daoists have long discussed how the universe formed. Even before the arising of Daoism as a religion, our ancestors already talked about these issues, for example in the major medical manual *Huangdi neijing* (The Yellow Emperor's Internal Classic, DZ 1021[4]). Now many people think that the doctrine of Daoism is a superstition or myth, but this is not the correct mind-set. Science has no real knowledge of the origin of the universe, either; modern cosmology does not know how the universe was created. They, too, are just presenting an invented, creative story that the universe started with the Big Bang. On the other hand, Daoist thought is essential to China. As the British scientist Joseph Needham notes, China without Daoism is like a tree with rotten roots. The *Daode jng* (Book of Dao and Virtue, DZ 3)[5] has it right, "The Dao gave birth to one; one gave birth to two; two gave birth to the myriad beings." This makes it clear that Laozi's worldview was Daoist, echoing an ancient Daoist perspective on how the universe was formed.

Worldview describes the relationship between humanity and nature, a complicated issue in modern science, which is worth thinking about. Science has been developing rapidly and given us numerous obvious benefits. However, what harm has that development caused? Modern science has brought great harm to nature, so we now must pay more attention to environmental protection. People should collaborate with nature to develop a good standard of living. In the end, does such a standard exist? Daoists believe that to achieve a good standard in material terms, it is important to be successful both spiritually and physically. It is important to examine these aspects separately, because if they are not realized, a good standard of living remains elusive. In the *Daode jing*, Laozi notes that people should be connected to nature and stick with the way they are meant to be. This leads to many modern issues, such as whether genetically modified foods are harmful to human beings and other questions well worth thinking about.

As regards view of life, it is important to understand that to be concerned with humanity and others is the same as dealing peacefully with our self. Where do we come from? Where do we go after death? This is we need to consider, each and every one of us. In the past, most people were buried in the earth. If

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[4] The work is translated variously. See Ilza Veith, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Maoshing Ni, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995).

[5] This major classic has been translated over 200 times into English. A comprehensive outline of its concepts, history and contemporary relevance is found in Livia Kohn, *Guides to Sacred Texts: The Daode Jing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

we still did this today, in a few years all nature would be one big cemetery. So now cremation is mandatory, and yet the number of tombs keeps increasing. This will not change even after hundreds of years. It is another problem well worth thinking about.

There are three levels, heaven, earth and humanity. The Great Commentary to the *Yijing* (Book of Changes)[6] says: "There is a heavenly way; there is a human way; there is an authentic way. Simultaneously, there are three types and yet only two." The *Yijing* says, "The established way of heaven is yin and yang; the established way of earth is yielding and firm; the established way of humanity is benevolent and righteous."

Daoists use these three levels in their cultivation practice, which is significantly different from Buddhism. Buddhists activate these levels by withdrawing from the world, cutting off all relationships to parents, children, and friends without exception. In other words, they artificially cut off the seven emotions (joy, anger, sadness, fear, worry, love, and hate) and six desires (of the five senses and the mind). Buddhists therefore inadvertently transform their intention toward being heartless and without love for all other beings. Monks, after leaving, home never even recognize their parents. On the other hand, in Daoism you are required to practice like a monk to get rid of the seven emotions and six desires while yet remaining connected. Daoists, therefore, intentionally substitute unintentional action for intention and use love for all beings in place of heartlessness.

The name of the Chan (Zen) school of Buddhism goes back to the Sanskrit word *dhyana*, which means deep absorption or engrossed meditative trance. It is similar to sitting meditation, rather simple in its basic practice. However, often simple things are hard to do. Chan practice emphasizes the body being empty, the mind being empty and Buddha being empty. Daoist emptiness is quite close to this understanding and both are based on breathing in order to form the body universe.

On the other hand, the range of practices in Buddhism is rather small; they require that you use the eyes to observe your nose and to look down, thus limiting your range vision. Daoists ask that the eyes look straight ahead, all the way to the horizon, extending the range. In Buddhist practice, one eventually remains in a state of emptiness, keeping one's eyes open and seeing a wider range while guarding against the world. In Daoist practice, we strive to concoct an elixir, while Buddhist practice culminates in the creation of relics. Other than that, the methods are very close, both moving toward clearer understand-

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[6] Another major Chinese classic that has had a wide impact on world culture, this has been translated many times. The most widely used and most fundamental rendition is by Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

ing, Daoists aiming to transcend the internal realm while Buddhists wish to attain enlightenment.

Daoists (*daoshi*) practice Daoist cultivation professionally. The *Taixiao langshu jing* (Scripture of the Great Dawn Elixir; DZ 55, 129) says, "A person who practices the great Dao is a Daoist. Following Dao in body and mind, only taking directives from Dao, only acting on behalf of Dao—this is what we call a Daoist." The term first appears in the Han dynasty as another term for master of methods (*fangshi*). Under the Northern Wei, Kou Qianzhi (365-448) reformed early organized Daoism and established rules for setting up altars at home, performing morning and evening services and practicing cultivation, albeit without leaving the family.

Under the Jin and Yuan dynasties, when Complete Perfection arose, Daoists became celibate and without possessions, joining monastic institutions. From then on, Daoists could be either, monastics or householders. Before that, as the *Fengdao kejie* (Rules and Precepts for Worshiping the Dao, DZ 1125[7]) of the early Tang (618-907), notes there were six types of Daoists: heavenly perfected, spirit immortals, mountain recluses, monastics, householders, and libationers. In addition, around the same time, Daoists instituted specific rules and precepts for behavior and cultivation, creating categories with exacting standards. Thus, the *Tang liudian* (Sixfold Legal Code of the Tang) says, "Daoist practitioners have three names: master of divine law, ritual and rules. Their virtue being high and their thinking pure, they are all called masters of refinement".

Those particularly familiar with the scriptures and of high religious decency were in charge of major rituals and sat high in the hall. Considered as the highest level, such practitioners were known as "priests of high merit" (*gaogong*). They presided over the all the priests in the temples and monasteries, who were further ranked according to abbot, prior, cellarer, and so on.

In Complete Perfection, male Daoists are called Qiandao, while females are Kundao, using terms from the *Yijing*. Altogether they are called Daoist followers. Daoists insist that one must have a teacher for Dao to be properly transmitted. At ordination, they receive a religious name and pledge filial piety to the master and loyalty to the ruler. They must be people of upstanding character and excellent virtue. To become either a priest or priestess, monk or nun, they must receive proper scriptures and vow to observe the precepts. They also obtain talismans and seals of office and practice in an institution, complete with a refectory and meditation hall. In exchange, ordinands pledge gifts of gold, silver, silk, and other valuables to the institution. After entering Dao, they dedicate their life to service, holding prayer sessions, chanting daily services, as well as burning incense and making appropriate offerings.

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[7] Translated in Livia Kohn, *The Daoist Monastic Manual: A Translation of the Fengdao kejie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Daoists are knowledgeable, erudite and highly cultivated. As such, they are honored as teachers and perfected. These honorary titles, unless Daoists left the order, were often bestowed upon them by the emperor, notably during the Six Dynasties, Tang, Song, and Yuan periods, both during life and posthumously. The appellation Heavenly Master (*tianshi*) is another Daoist honorific. However, it is commonly used as a special name for Zhang Daoling, his followers and descendants, the members of the Heavenly Masters or Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi) school. Under the Northern Wei dynasty, when Kou Qianzhi reformed the early Daoist organizations, he also called himself Heavenly Master.

In contrast, masters of methods are not strictly speaking Daoist priests. Rather, they have studied many methods, sometimes called pseudo-sciences and developed skills while living among ordinary people. As a result, they have a vast arsenal of knowledge. They typically wander about in search of their ideal heir and do not transmit their knowledge to many others. During the Han dynasty, Zhang Liang was such a master before he left the mountains; similarly, Zhuge Liang was known as a hermit, taught by a master of methods.

From another point of view, there are three types of Daoists: recluses who live in caves, scholars who study virtue and lay followers who live with their families. The Dragon Gate lineage is no exception to this rule.

Thus, recluses cultivate yin-yang and the five phases, study the five arts of fate calculation, physiognomy, divination, philosophy and medicine as well as the relationship between humanity and heaven and other areas that relate to cultivation practice. They focus on the relationship between the Three Periods (past, present, future) and the Three Worlds (desire, form, formlessness). Their methodology is to use their body as a laboratory to examine the relationship between the universe and the human body, focusing on human longevity in relation to the various transformations of the universe. Their goal is to find the ultimate origin of all, transcending the Three Worlds and no longer being subject to laws of the five phases.

Scholars, second, study texts and scriptures, etiquette and traditional rituals, focusing generally on culture and heritage. Their method is to preserve, organize, and study the Daoist classics; their main goal is to find the ultimate origin of humanity.

Third, lay followers come in many different forms, including recluses, scholars and disciples. They have different names, traditions and beliefs. Reclusive lay followers are very much like celibate recluses, sharing the same beliefs and practices. Lay scholars similarly match monastic scholars, engaging in intellectual and ethical pursuits. Disciples include anyone who has faith in Dao and follows the basic precepts, whether they have received formal transmission.

Daoism uses concepts of formless Dao, such as the notion of essential spirit expressed in views on universe, world, and life to educate people (abstract); it also uses specific principles contained in these concepts as well as

particular methods to teach people (concrete), matching an overarching theory and its various ways of verification. In essence, like all religions, it focuses on how best to behave, how to go through life successfully, providing answer to questions of where we come from, where we go, and how we can be free. It does not primarily teach how to become an immortal or attain Dao.

In antiquity, shamans performed ceremonies by making offerings to heaven, earth and humanity. They would use their voice as their primary expression and this expression was nothing but the recitation of chants. The purpose of chanting, be it of chants or scriptures, is to resonate with and touch people's heart-and-mind as well as their life force (*ling*, that is, animal vitality, life force). It must sound in at least two or three, possibly even seven tones, matching chords in music; otherwise the vibration will not reach people's heart or life force. Chanting can be done both individually and in groups.

Daoist Schools

The Dragon Gate lineage of the Complete Perfection school is one of the largest organizations of Daoism; it also continues the tradition of Daoist natural philosophy and the main lines of the cultivation of perfection.

Daoism was founded under the rule of Emperor Shun of the Eastern Han dynasty (126-144). It is the major indigenous religion of China and can be also called China's national religion. Its history goes back 1800 years. However, if you look at the various methods and occult arts common during the Warring States period (479-221 BCE), you find Daoism has precursors in ancient shamanism. In other words, its religious beliefs and practices go back a long way, grown and spread widely since then so that they cover the whole of Chinese civilization.

Unlike other religions, which focus strongly on the afterlife, Daoism is based on ancient Chinese beliefs that center on Dao, the natural way, as the supreme entity and have the vision of immortality at their core. To attain this, Daoists use the dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny as their main strategy, which they pursue in this life and age. Daoism is thus the religion of immortality and as such forms an important part of Chinese culture. It has had a major impact on the people's way of thinking and their way of life, forming as it were the foundation of ancient science. It has also touched upon all aspects of society, politics and economics. Its influence still exists today and the development of modern science cannot be separated from it.

Over the centuries of Daoist development, there have been many great masters. During the Spring and Autumn (771-479 BCE) and Warring States (479-221 BCE), Laozi was the first to formulate ideas about Dao, reaching beyond worldly boundaries to define the original state of the universe and formally establish the concept. When Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin came along,

they cultivated the body to accumulate *qi,* then refined essence into *qi, qi* into spirit, and spirit to return to emptiness. From here, they cultivated emptiness to merge with Dao and thereby return to the source of the universe. They established five kinds of cultivation practices that became the benchmark for the Daoist system to maintain good health and gradually refine the self. On this basis, they formulated their particular art of internal mastery, known as the Zhong-Lü system.

After the formal establishment of organized Daoism (in the 2nd century CE), although there were many schools and lineages, most still applied Zhong-Lü training methods. As history moved along, Daoist schools, too, underwent big changes. Some were active for a while, then dissolved, such as, for example the Way of Great Peace (Taiping Dao) under the Later Han, the Way of the Northern Heavenly Masters under the Northern Wei, the Way of Great Oneness (Taiyi Dao) during the Jin and Yuan, and others more. Gone today, they did not leave much information about their training methods behind. Transmissions to later generations, therefore, come from about a dozen schools and they tend not to differ much. During the Middle Ages, after the Wei and Jin dynasties (5th c. CE), there were three major schools: Heavenly Masters, Highest Clarity (Shangqing), and Numinous Treasure (Lingbao). On a theoretical level, their teachings tended to merge, so their occult sciences are hard to differentiate. Besides these main schools, there are also lesser ones, such as the various lineages of internal alchemy, known as the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, and Central schools: their practices are very close and they differ mainly in their theories of cultivation.

Most generally, Daoism can be divided into two major systems that focus on ritual methods such as chants and talismans versus cultivation practices such as internal alchemy. Since the Yuan and Ming, the various branches of the two systems have merged, forming a thorough mixture, divided mainly in terms of social status according to the main schools of Heavenly Masters or Orthodox Unity and Complete Perfection. The former focuses on reciting chants and applying talismans, providing an organizational umbrella for systems of this kind; the latter specializes in the process of internal alchemy and represents all schools of this ilk. However, both use a mixture of ritual and cultivation techniques, merging and interweaving them. Thus, lay Daoists of Orthodox Unity also practice the kind of internal alchemy typical for Complete Perfection, while the monastics of Complete Perfection are also competent in the use of chants and talismans.

From the perspective of internal mastery, it is quite possible to classify the main schools according to their overarching emphasis on ritual versus cultivation. In this context those focusing in ritual are Orthodox Unity, Highest Clarity, Numinous Treasure, Clarity and Subtlety, Purity and Light, and Divine Empyrean.

The Orthodox Unity school, also known as the Heavenly Masters, was founded by Zhang Daoling in the late Han dynasty (142 CE) and originally described as the Five Pecks of Rice. Zhang's grandson, Zhang Lu, inherited the leadership position to be succeeded by a direct descendant ever since. Since the Sui and Tang dynasties, when it established its headquarters on Mount Longhu (Jiangxi), it has also been called the Longhu School. As far as internal cultivation is concerned, it traditionally supports practices of meditation, healing exercises, and *qi* absorption. In the late Northern Song, the 30th Heavenly Master, Zhang Ji, first integrated the Zhong-Lü system of internal practices, merging their cultivation methods with chanting and talismans.

The Highest Clarity school goes back to the posthumous revelations by the Heavenly Masters priestess Wei Huacun (251-334) to a group of aristocratic seekers during the Eastern Jin. It was codified by Tao Hongjing (456-536) under the Liang. He established a religious center on the three peaks of Maoshan near Nanjing and it spread from there under the name Maoshan school. The school emphasizes self-cultivation, meditation, *qi* absorption, healing exercises, as well as massage, grain avoidance, supplementary herbal medicines, and more. It combined all these into one integrated system of refinement and cultivation, merging them with ritual and magical techniques.

The Numinous Treasure school was founded by Ge Xuan during the period of Three Kingdoms in the 3rd century CE. It placed great importance on purification rituals, such as purgations and rites of renewal, but in terms of personal cultivation and magical arts it is hardly different from Highest Clarity. For the longest time, it was centered on Mount Gezao south of Nanchang (Jiangxi), leading to appellation Gezao school.

The school of Clarity and Subtlety (Qingwei) emerged during the Tang-Song transition, founded by Zu Shu of the late Tang, and flourished greatly until the early Yuan. It combined the key characteristics of all sorts of Daoist teachings and schools, emphasizing the combination of internal refinement and talisman application. It also has a set of unique alchemical methods. In the early Yuan, its teachings spread to Mount Wudang in Hubei and soon integrated with Complete Perfection, of which it now forms the lineage of Clarity and Subtlety.

The school of Purity and Light (Jingming) was originally founded by Xu Xun during the Jin dynasty of the 3rd century, but became prominent only in the early Southern Song, when it was active in the western mountains of Nanchang (Jiangxi). Under the Yuan, Liu Yu enhanced it, integrating Daoist and Confucian visions. Overall, the school, now also a lineage of Complete Perfection, presents a combination of alchemical and ritual methods; its internal cultivation closely relates to Zhong-Lü methods.

The Divine Empyrean school (Shenxiao) was founded by Wang Wenqing during the late Northern Song. Supported by Emperor Huizong, its thunder

rites spread widely in society. It emphasized internal refinement as the root and external talisman work as the branches, using its unique training methods. Sa Shoujian, Wang's disciple, further founded various subsects or linages, called West River, Heaven, and Patriarch Sa.

Thus, internal alchemy came to encompass a number of different methods and lineages, known as the Southern, Northern, Eastern, Western, and Huashan schools under the Song. After the Yuan, they morphed into lineages under the overarching umbrella of Complete Perfection.

The Southern School was founded by Zhang Boduan, rose to popularity in the Southern Song and was subsumed under Complete Perfection in the early Yuan, from then on known as the Southern lineage. Zhang Boduan's based his teachings on the practices of two minor lines, the school of Clear Cultivation (Qingxiu) and that of the Dual Cultivation of Yin and Yang (Yinyang shu angxiu). The former had four generations of masters, notably Shi Tai, Xue Daoguang, Chen Nan, and Bai Yuchan. The latter two also formed religious communities. The Dual Cultivation of Yin and Yang school began with Liu Yongnian during the Northern Song. It was transmitted to Weng Baoguang and Ruo Yizi, but they never established communities of followers.

The Northern School of Complete Perfection was founded by Wang Chongyang. He had seven disciples known as the Seven Patriarchs or Perfected. After the master's death, they moved to different areas of China to each form a lineage. To wit, Qiu Chuji—Longmen (Dragon Gate), Ma Yu—Yuxian, Tan Chuduan—Nanwu, Liu Chuxuan—Suishan, Wang Chuyi—Yushan, Hao Datong—Huashan, Sun Bu'er—Qingjing (Clarity and Stillness). Among these seven lineages, Dragon Gate is the most powerful. Since the Ming and Qing, most famous grandmasters have come from this line.

During the Jiajing reign of the Ming (1522-1566), the fourth generation master of the Dragon Gate linage was the Laoshan (Shandong) Daoist Sun Xuanqing. He started a new line called Laoshan, also known as Jinshan (Gold Mountain). Next, in the early Qing, the Tibetan master Yetapodu (Huang Shouzhong), also a member of the Dragon Gate lineage, on Mount Jizu in Yunnan started the West Indian Heart Practice lineage. Its cultivation methods combine esoteric, tantric Buddhist techniques with the Dragon Gate precepts, and it came to be known as the Esoteric Buddhist lineage. Another important development was the linage of the two masters Wu and Liu, first founed in the late Ming and prominent in the Qing. Its main leader was the Daoist Wu Shouyang.

In other developments, in the early Yuan, the Complete Perfection master Li Daochun, a disciple of Bai Yuchan, in Yizheng (Jiangsu), combined the Northern and Southern lineages. After exhaustive studies in internal alchemy, he created the Prenatal lineage (Xiantian), also known as the Central lineage (Zhongpai).

A major Ming dynasty figure, moreover, was Lu Xixing from Xinghua in Yangzhou (Jiangsu). Lü Dongbin appeared to him in numerous spirit-writing sessions to transmit his teachings. As a result, he composed the *Fanghu waishi* (External History of Mount Fanghu; JH 18[8]) to spread his system of internal alchemy, which strongly emphasized the dual cultivation of yin and yang and has since come to be known as the Eastern lineage of internal alchemy. Then again, during the Qing, there was the Daoist Li Xiyue in Sichuan, who similarly encountered Lü Dongbin and Zhang Sanfeng and received their teachings of internal alchemy. His books, such as the *Sanche mizhi* (Secret Instructions of the Three Vehicles, JH 15), detail various alchemical methods, while also discussing the dual cultivation of yin and yang. His line came to be known as the Western lineage. Alchemical theory differs among these lines in certain unique ways, however, before they became formally instituted as schools, their basic practices continue those of the Northern and Southern schools, both forming different aspects of dual cultivation.

Another line goes back to the famous immortal Chen Tuan (d. 989), who was active under the Five Dynasties and in the early Northern Song. He had his own theory and style of internal alchemy, founding the Old Huashan school. Between the Yuan and Ming, he appeared to Zhang Sanfeng and transmitted his system to him. Zhang in turn started a new movement of practice called the Hidden or Dragon Likeness lineage. The *Zhuzhen zongpai congbo* (Comprehensive Register of All Perfected Schools and Lineages) lists a total of thirteen lineages of Complete Perfection that honor Zhang Sanfeng, including the Nature lineage (Ziran), thus documenting to what degree Zhang influenced major trends within internal alchemy.

Zhang Sanfeng was originally called Tong, with the courtesy name Junbao, also known as Xuanxuanzi. He is best known as the creator of taijiquan. A native of Liaoning, he became the founding master of the Wudang lineage. The Ming emperor Yingzong, in the 3rd year of Tianshun (1459), conferred on him the title "Perfected of Manifestating the Transformations of Pervasive Subtlety"; in the 22nd year of Chenghua (1486), the emperor Xianzong granted him the title "Perfected of Shaded Brilliance and Lofty Volition." The Jiajing Emperor in the 1500s further honored him with the title "Perfected of Clear Emptiness and Primordial Wonder."

Zhang Sanfeng also practiced according to the *Lingbao bifa* (Conclusive Methods of Numinous Treasure; DZ 1191)[9]. Making efforts over many years, he

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[8] JH stands for Daozang jinghua, a collection of Daoist materials by the Taiwan scholar and physician Xiao Tianshi of the 1920s. Numbering follows Louis Komjathy, *Title Index to Daoist Collections* (Cambridge, Mass.: Three Pines Press, 2002).

[9] This text goes back to the Northern Song dynasty (12th c). Its full title is "Secret Transmission of Master Zhenyang's Complete Methods of Numinous Treasure." An early classic of

yet could not find the best cultivation method. So he returned to Mount Wudang, where he practiced trance meditation in deep isolation in the Taizi dong (Prince's Cave). Eventually Lü Dongbin appeared to him, teaching him the *Lingbao bifa.*

Several items prove that Zhang Sanfeng fully mastered the method. For one, his works completely and clearly explain the entire sequence of practices as found in the text. This shows that he fully grasped Lü Dongbin's cultivation methods and practices. For another, he could easily differentiate the different steps outlined in the text and divide it into two or more sections—not an easy task to do.

The Patriarchs

Complete Perfection traces itself to five major patriarchs. The first among them was Wang Shaoyang, whose methods are still present in the Shaoyang lineage. He was the first to receive the major methods of the golden elixir and also a key founder of Complete Perfection. The second patriarch was the Han-dynasty master Zhongli Quan, also known as the Perfected of Perfect Yang and senior master of the Zhenyang (Perfect Yang) lineage. Following him as third patriarch was Lü Dongbin, succeeded by his apprentice Liu Haichan (Liu Cao) and, fifth, by Wang Chongyang, the leader of the Chongyang (Twofold Yang) lineage and key transmitter of the three practices of immortality.

In addition, there are also five Southern teachings, reaching from Zhang Ziyang to Zhang Boduan, all taught by Lü Dongbin.

Eventually, the five Northern and the five Southern lines were unified in the system created by Qiu Chuji, leader of the Seven Perfected and founder of the Dragon Gate lineage.

Although there are numerous Daoist lineage, each with teachings passed from one generations to the next, yet there is one fundamental and common thread among them. The following outlines the system:

Northern lineage: Wang Xuanfu (aka Shaoyang) → Zhongli Quan (aka Zhengyang) → Lü Dongbin (aka: Chunyang) → Liu Haichan → Wang Chongyang → Seven Perfected =

Ma Danyang- Yuxian lineage (Encountering Immortals)
Tan Chuduan-Nanwu lineage (Southern Emptiness)
Liu Chuxuan-Suishan lineage (Mount Sui)
Wang Chuyi-Yushan lineage (Mount Yu)

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internal alchemy, it is translated in Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein, *Procédés secrets du joyau magique* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1984).

Hao Datong-Huashan lineage (Mount Hua)
Sun Bu'er -Qingjing lineage (Clarity and Stillness)
Qiu Chuji- Longmen lineage (Dragon Gate)

Southern lineage: Zhongli Quan→Lü Dongbin→Chen Tuan→Liu Hai-chan→Wang Chongyang, Zhang Boduan

Clear Cultivation: Zhang Boduan→Shi Tai→ Xue Daoguang →Chen Nan→Bai Yuchan

Dual Cultivation: Zhang Boduan→Liu Yongnian→Weng Bao-guang→Ruo Yizi

Eastern lineage: Lu Xixing
Central lineage: Li Daochun
Western lineage: Li Hanxu
Sanfeng lineage: Zhang Sanfeng

Dragon Gate lineage: Patriarch Qiu had many apprentices during his lifetime, most importantly: Zhao Baoyuan (aka Daojian)—Zhang Bizhi (aka Daochun)—Chen Chongyi (aka Tongwei)—Zhou Dazhuo (aka Xuanfu)—Zhang Jingding—Shen Jingyuan—Zhao Zhensong—Wang Changyue—Wu Shouyang—Sun Taiguan—Gao Dongli (aka Qingyu)—Min Yide.

Although the transmission process within the Dragon Gate lineage was never interrupted, on occasion masters were in seclusion and hard to find. Examples include Chen Tongwei, Zhou Xuanpu, Zhang Jingding, Zhao Zhensong and others who meditated deeply and practiced cultivation in deep seclusion, never appearing in the world. Only when Wang Changyue received the transmission from the sixth-generation master Zhao Zhensong and thus became the leader of the seventh generation has the lineage been known publicly in the world. Similarly, although it divided into many branches, each and every one of them has been the direct inheritor of Zhong-Lü arts and methods.

The Arts of Immortality

The arts of immortality used in the Dragon Gate lineage owe their origin to the five northern patriarchs. Wang Shaoyang was the first patriarch. He taught Zhongli Quan who, after completed his training in the mountains, transmitted the teachings to Lü Dongbin. Together they wrote the two key texts of our practice today, the *Lingbao bifa* and the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* (The Secret of the

Golden Flower; JH 94).[10] They present the main corpus of the arts of interior mastery. Zhongli Quan made an oath that he would never leave the mountains, which is why Lü Dongbin traveled through the world and lectured. Both Liu Haichan and Wang Chongyang obtained the teachings from Lü and completed all the different levels of training, in due course becoming the fourth and fifth of the early patriarchs.

Liu Haichan in his turn transmitted the Daoist teaching to Zhang Boduan, Shi Xingling, Xue Daoguang, Chen Chuixu, and Bai Yuchan. These are jointly known as the five Southern patriarchs. In addition also including Liu Yongping and Peng Si, they became the Southern Seven Perfected.

Wang Chongyang transmitted his teachings to spread to Ma Danyang, Sun Bu'er, Hao Datong, Wang Chuyi, Liu Chuxuan, Tan Chuduan and Qiu Chuji. They were collectively known as the Northern Seven Perfected.

The five original patriarchs together with the latter group of Seven Perfected form the Northern School, while their southern counterparts became the Southern School—all going back to the same five original teachers.

Mastery of inner nature centers on the refinement of spirit, making it return to the self and be active: spirit contains *qi*. Mastery of life focuses on the refinement of *qi* while recognizing that *qi* contains spirit. In fact, the two cannot be separated. Buddhists begin by cultivating life, then move on work on inner nature. Their practice is like yoga and tantrism, which both also begin by cultivating life. In Chan, mastery divides into internal and external—beginning with the external, which is a form of martial arts while internal training is supplementary, focusing on critical examination and various arts of nurturing life.

The Southern and Northern schools originated from the same lineage, but are different in various ways. The Northern school was transmitted dominantly in northern China and from the beginning has remained true to model as taught in the orthodox transmission handed down by the founder Lü Dongbin. From the original five patriarchs to the Seven Perfected and all the way to today, they did not mix any Buddhism teachings or practices into theirs. The Southern school was most popular in Jiangnan; its patriarchs integrated Chan Buddhist ideas and methods, often using Buddhist terminology to explain the progress toward perfection. For example, the third eye is called Heavenly Eye

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[10] This goes back to a spirit-writing cult in Sichuan in the early Qing dynasty (17th c.) whose members received the text from Lü Dongbin in a trance session. It also contains a complete outline of the alchemical process. Its title literally means "Fundamental Instruction on the Golden Flower of the Great One." Its first translation in 1929 by the sinologist Richard Wilhelm in close cooperation with the psychologist Carl Jung established its English title: *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962). It has since been retranslated by Thomas Cleary, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: The Classic Chinese Book of Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992).

or Mind Opening in the Northern school. The Southern school says that it opens when the three colors red, green and white gather in the Hall of Yin (Yintang) and that it can also emit light and *qi*. Actually their energy methods are the same.

In fact, the Northern and Southern schools have the same origin and both advocate the dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny. However, they spread in different regions. Early founders were active north of the Yangtze and focused on internal alchemy. They did not operate south of the Yangtze, an area where operative alchemy was more prominent. The Northern school thus spread mainly north of the Yangtze, while the Southern school centered in the south.

As regards body cultivation, the two schools differ geographically. They operate in different ranges of the earth's latitude, which forms part of the reason why their practices are different. The area north of the Yangtze has four distinct seasons (matching the life force of the five directions, including the middle). Within the system of the five phases, the north is classified as water and matches the kidneys. Therefore, teachers in the north first work first on inner nature, then on life-destiny. The south, on the other hand, belongs to the phase fire. Teachers here, the masters of the Southern school, concentrate first on life-destiny, then on inner nature.

The two schools' methods for cutting the life-force root (sexual desire) also differ somewhat. The Northern school advocates using *Lingbao bifa* practices to completely extirpate it, while the Southern school retains it to some extent. In addition, in southern China, Buddhism was highly popular. Since Daoism had a long history in China, its classics and text rich and abundant, when Buddhism entered China it needed to adapt to local cultural and geographical features and absorbed many Daoist practices and teachings.

During the process of scripture translation, Buddhists used large numbers of Daoist terms and concepts to package their ideas. At the same time, some Buddhists were also practicing Daoist exercises while Daoists learned to undertake Buddhist techniques. This led to a thorough mix of teachings, clearly reflected in the later works of the Southern school. The Northern school, on the other hand, was little affected by Buddhism. Later, Christianity, Islam, and other religions, as they entered China, similarly borrowed Daoist and Buddhist terminology. For this reason, these terms that appear first in the Daoist classics, reflecting an ancient cultural heritage of China, also manifest in the writings of other religions as they used them to illustrate their doctrines and teachings.

As regards the overall goal of cultivation, all the different schools and lineages of Daoists are in agreement. For them, the goal is to pursue life, attain longevity and reach immortality. Based on the theory of the Three Worlds, this involves three levels and three interpretations of life-destiny.

Upper: Comprehending Destiny
Middle: Knowing Destiny
Lower: Stabilizing Destiny

This is the foundation of the Daoist system of cultivation and refinement.

The Dragon Gate lineage has retained the original Zhong-Lü transmission in its fullness, remaining free from the influence of other religions and maintaining its unique development.

Chapter Two

Neigong shu Overview

The *Lingbao tong zhineng neigong shu* (Arts of Internal Mastery, Wisdom, and Potential, Based on Numinous Treasure; hereafter abbreviated *Neigong shu)* presents a rigorous and complete physical cultivation system to enhance human wisdom and potential. Integrating various techniques undertaken while sitting, lying, standing and walking, this system is one of many ancient Daoist methods of internal cultivation. Movement and stillness support each other; the dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny join together. The exact methods differ according to time, place, individual needs, and health: there are many ways to train efficiently. They should always be flexible, simple, and easy to do.

The *Neigong shu* is based on two ancient Daoist texts: the *Lingbao bifa*, which goes back to the immortals Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin; and the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, which also derives from Lü. The overarching method is the concoction of a golden elixir through the dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny. It involves various techniques, which in turn center on key principles that relate to particular methods.

These methods are twofold: internal mastery goes back to the *Lingbao bifa* and centers on cultivation of life; the way of wisdom and potential originates from the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* and emphasizes the cultivation of inner nature. They are fruitfully combined here. Altogether, the text contains three practices and nine methods. The three practices are sitting meditation, external work, and sleep practice. They, in turn, divide into nine main methods:

1. Attracting immortality
2. The practice of the Three Immortals
3. Internal cultivation (according to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*)
4. Women's alchemy
5. Stars, trigrams, and the five phases
6. Capturing solar essence and lunar florescence
7. Energy balancing and standing poses
8. Exchanging *qi* with nature and sleep practice
9. Partner cultivation and reciting chants

The nine additional methods are:

1. Attaining wisdom and potential
2. Eliminating diseases
3. Healing diseases
4. Circulating life force
5. Stabilizing control over life and death
6. Stabilizing the heart-and-mind
7. Pursuing immortality
8. Stopping the souls
9. Continuing appearances

When I was young, I was trained and taught by three Daoist hermits: Zhang Hedao, a master of the Wuji lineage and a highly regarded doctor and Daoist adviser; Wang Jiaoming, also known as Songlingzi, a member of the lineage of Clarity and Stillness; and Jia Jiaoyi, also known as Yanglingzi, who belonged to the Empty Stillness line. From them I received ordination, including my Daoist name Yongsheng, my practice name Linglingzi and my alternative title Gudu, which means Lone Daoist. I practiced according to the *Neigong shu* very hard for many years and fully attained their secret power.

The Nine Main Methods

1. Attracting Immortality

Attracting immortality is a Daoist practice of sitting meditation laying the groundwork for the practice of the Three Immortals and women's alchemy. It is the foundation, required before one can start any part of the *Lingbao bifa*, highly effective to enhance the body, repair energy leaks and gain full restoration to the original state. It builds a solid foundation. Closely connected to the *Lingbao bifa*, it plays a role in each of its forty-five steps and each step of the system relates to these techniques. For this reason, it is a requirement that you practice it thoroughly. Once you have completed it successfully, you can you proceed to the practice of the Three Immortals and/or women's alchemy.

Attracting immortality is mainly used to adjust people's internal rhythms or patterns, matching them to the natural world and the universe. It consists of twelve segments:

1. Focusing the mind in sitting meditation
2. Steadying the body
3. Withdrawing the senses: no looking or listening
4. Reversing the direction of the senses to look and listen inside
5. Steadying ordinary respiration

6. Calming spirit in three steps
7. Establishing perfect breathing
8. Cultivating freedom from leakage
9. Looking inside and reversing listening
10. Controlling spirit in serene reflection
11. Listening and following the breath
12. Nurturing and cleansing the heart-and-mind

2. The Practice of the Three Immortals

The practice of the Three Immortals forms part of a multitude of Daoist cultivation techniques that refine perfection. Today we speak of it as the prime cultivation method of the *Lingbao bifa*, used by the eminent immortals of old, Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, in cultivating the elixir. Many masters have practiced the technique and written classical masterpieces about it. They elaborated the particular techniques of elixir cultivation in various ways, but in their basic theory they always went back to the *Lingbao bifa*.

The text was compiled by Zhongli Quan after he completed the training of the great golden elixir. He then passed it on to Lü Dongbin, who added his own take, so that their combined knowledge is manifest in the work.

The immortal Lü Dongbin in turn passed the technique on to Master Wang Chongyang, the founder of the Complete Perfection school. He painstakingly studied the method and taught it to the leader of the Seven Perfected, Qiu Chuji. Since this involves three generations of immortals, the practice came to be called the practice of the Three Immortals. Patriarch Qiu diligently practiced and he passed on his knowledge to future generations, his attainment being such that he came to be known as the "heavenly immortal who embodies the primordial." In order to make the practices available in the world, he founded the Dragon Gate lineage. Since then, it has been part of the secret repertoire of Daoists, taught only verbally and upon swearing dire vows, without any written record. It was never to be revealed to outsiders.

The practice is a cultivation method that merges the human body with the heavenly bodies of sun, moon and earth, combining the postnatal with the prenatal. The earth rotates around the sun, completing one cycle in one year. The human body matches the sun, making it possible to opens all fourteen vessels and meridians. This is called the large heavenly circuit (commonly also known as the macrocosmic orbit).

The moon rotates around the earth, completing one cycle in one month. The human body matches the moon, making it possible to open the Governing and Conception Vessels. This is called the small heavenly circuit (microcosmic orbit).

The earth completes one rotation in one day. The human body matches the earth, making it possible to cultivate yin and yang, water and fire, and open the heavenly circuit as it passes through the *mao* (5-7 a.m.) and *you* hours (5-7 p.m.).

When the earth undergoes its external transformations, it gives rise to vibration. The human body matches the vibrations of the earth, making it possible to cultivate spontaneous internal vibrations. More specifically, the practice of the Three Immortals divides into three vehicles, ten methods, and forty-five steps.

The lesser vehicle is immortality practice on the human level. It involves the pairing of yin and yang, the coagulating and dispersing of water and fire, the mating of dragon and tiger as well as the concoction and refinement of the elixir. These are four methods leading to peace, happiness, and long life, which divide into seventeen steps:

I. Pairing yin and yang
1. Yin-yang embryo respiration
2. Perfect embryo respiration
3. Join the trigrams Kan and Li

II. Coagulating and dispersing water and fire
4. Harbor perfect *qi* in great Oneness
5. Lesser refinement of the physical form
6. Heavenly lad and heavenly grandmother

III. Mating of dragon and tiger
7. Collect, repair, and circulate the elixir
8. Nurture the immortal embryo
9. Harmonize water and fire
10. See the meeting of perfect husband and wife
11. Let *qi* interact, while the form stays stable

IV. Concoction and refinement of the elixir
12. The firing process
13. The small heavenly circuit
14. The firing process of the heavenly circuit
15. Concentrate spirit and nurture *qi*
16. Concentrate *qi* and nurture spirit
17. Refine yang and nurture spirit

In immortality practice on the human level, we use the body as a furnace, *qi* as main ingredient, the heart-and-mind as fire, and the kidneys as water. In

the process of nine reversions and seven returns, the trigrams Kan and Li merge and elixir circulation based on the golden fluid emerges.

The middle vehicle is immortality practice on the level of earth. It involves flying the gold crystal from behind the elbows as well as elixir circulation based on jade and golden fluids. These are the three methods of attaining immortality, which divide into fifteen steps.

I. Flying the gold crystal from behind the elbows
1. Reverting essence to nourish the brain
2. Starting the River Carriage
3. Mating of dragon and tiger
4. Reducing lead and augmenting mercury
5. Recovering youthful vitality

II. Elixir circulation based on the jade fluid
6. The jade fluid talisman for refining the physical form
7. Cleansing the immortal embryo
8. Minor elixir circulation
9. Major elixir circulation
10. Nine-based elixir circulation

III. Elixir circulation based on the golden fluid
11. The golden fluid talisman for refining the physical form
12. Raising the fire and incinerating the body
13. Golden flower and jade dew
14. The great merging
15. The method of yellow and white

In immortality practices on the earth level, we use spirit as furnace, *qi* as main ingredient, the sun fire, and the moon as water. We also dive deep into the sea to search for treasure and fly through the air to gaze at the moon, greatly uniting yin and yang.

The great vehicle is immortality practices on the heavenly level. It involves movng toward the prime and refining *qi,* practicing internal observation and energy exchange, as well as transcending and shedding the physical form. It comes in thirteen steps:

I. Moving toward the prime and refining *qi*
1. Transcend the internal courtyard
2. Refine *qi* to perfect the physical form
3. The purple golden elixir
4. Burn the yang spirit

5. Grow three flowers at the Crown Gate

II. Internal observation and energy exchange
6. Gather yang spirit
7. Blaze heavenly fire
8. Exchange the mundane for immortality
9. Perfect emptiness
10. Paradise in the world and in heaven

III. Transcending and shedding the physical form
11. Enter and exit the physical form
12. Shed the body as a spirit immortal
13. Transcend the ordinary and enter the sagely

In immortality practices on the heavenly level, we use spirit as furnace, inner nature as the main ingredient, wisdom as fire, and the body as water. We realize the nine palaces of heaven can never be destroyed, the universe always changes, and humanity and heaven transform together.

3. Internal Cultivation (According to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*)

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* is a masterpiece of Daoist writing. Its methods form a required part of practicing the forty-five steps of the *Lingbao bifa*, connecting one with the next.[1] Methods include attaining wisdom and potential as well as calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice (in front of the head at the level of the third eye).

The focus here is on the cultivation of inner nature. It starts with the practice of the internal lines as created by Lü Dongbin, a prerequisite for calming spirit, which in turn comes before practicing dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny. Picking herbs, concocting the elixir and refining the yin and yang spirits, as well as the practice of the Three Immortals and women's alchemy cannot be separated from calming spirit. For this, you need to be aware where the mysterious pass is located. This is central to the teaching of Wang Chongyang, one of the five northern patriarchs who founded the Complete Perfection school with its strong emphasis on the cultivation of inner nature. This is the basis for refining essence, *qi*, and spirit; it all starts with the practice of the internal lines and calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

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[1] Master Wang says that you need to have opened the Heavenly Eye and be able to see pictures to help you understand the material of the *Lingbao bifa*. Without this, you cannot understand anything of the text and will encounter obstacles. This is why you need to have completed this step.

Cultivation according to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* divides into ten steps, the first four of which are:

I. Strongly open the Heavenly Eye; with a clear mind see your true inner nature. This consists of four methods:

1. Intentionally circulate spirit light
2. Strongly open the Heavenly Eye
3. Water and fire interchange
4. The three luminaries (sun, moon, stars) come together

II. Calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, revert the light, and guard the life force. This consists of four methods:

1. Revert the light and guard the life force
2. Rotate the sun and moon [eyes]
3. Sun and moon unite
4. Life force coagulates at the mysterious opening

III. Focus spirit in the Cavity of *Qi,* cleanse the civil and martial. This consists of four methods:

1. Drop the curtain and revert the light
2. Produce medicine in the Kun Palace
3. Steady the breath and cleanse yourself
4. Let the light coagulate into a small pearl

IV. Turn your vision toward internal illumination, circulate and transform the five phases. This consists of four methods:

1. Let spirit guide the small pearl
2. Circulate and transform the five phases
3. Merge spirit and life force into oneness
4. Nurture the dragon pearl

4. Women's Alchemy

This is seated meditation practice for women, a major part of ancient Daoist Kundao cultivation and one of the great forms of cultivating perfection. My master also taught me these techniques in twelve steps, but because the first deals with ethics, I present mainly the other eleven.

The main divisions of the practice follow theory of ancient Chinese medicine as it explains the changes, growth, and development of the body, testifying to and outlining the natural relationship between the body and heaven as well as the differences in the methods of cultivating perfection among men and women. It comes with eleven distinct methods:

1. Attracting immortality

2. Observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal (lungs)
3. Repairing the channels
4. Decapitating the red dragon[2]
5. Practicing according to the (sexual guide) Plain Woman
6. Massaging the breasts to recover youth
7. Setting up the cauldron and developing the embryo (Step 1); creating the fluid and concocting the elixir (Step 2)
8. Performing embryo respiration
9. Refining the yang spirit
10. Completing yang spirit light
11. Moving toward the prime and going beyond the ordinary

The first method of observing the heart through the mother of metal comes in two forms, a partner practice called "two swallows flying," and a solo technique that uses internal heat to circulate metal. They are mainly to enhance the woman's hormonal level. As hormones rise, a uterus tumor can grow easily, so be sure to follow the practice guidelines. When practicing these two forms, the contraction of the uterus can be immense; thus, nowadays, it is excellent for those who have given birth but unsuitable for unmarried women or married ones without children. Women's practice needs to be complete before undertaking work according to the sexual manual *Sunü jing* (Classic of the Plain Woman), thus is not convenient to be taught. Women who no longer have a uterus, too, can practice: an interior space will open in its original place in due course.

5. Stars, Trigrams, and the Five Phases

Pacing the seven stars of the Dipper unites the postnatal with the prenatal; it is one way to join the human body with heavenly bodies. Stepping on the nine palaces and eight trigrams similarly unites the postnatal with the prenatal; it is one way to merge the body with the nine palaces. These two practices can be used together with the intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams. They are Daoist ways of cultivating perfection and in short are methods where "heaven and humanity become one." Here practitioners activate their internal universe and unite it with the natural universe, causing their bodily universe to merge with the greater universe of the world, then mixing together the energy of the body and that of the cosmos in productive, mutual transformation.

The intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams as well as the five phases practice to open the meridians, vessels and bone pathways consist of both sit-

[2] This involves four parts: secret techniques, reversing the menstrual flow, using fire and decapitation.

ting meditation and external movement. These names reflect traditional Daoist appellations.

The intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams together with the three methods of opening the meridians, vessels and bone pathways are unique and directional breathing methods of cultivation that apply recollection, intention, thought, penetrating force, lifting force, pushing force, pressure, component force, resultant force, tensile force, torsional force, angles and strength—all to work with the human bodily universe and the natural universe. Stepping on the nine palaces and eight trigrams, moreover, is used to forcefully open the body universe in order to open its meridians, vessels and bone pathways.

This practice divides according to three vehicles :

1. Form your body universe, eliminate disease and lengthen life expectancy
2. Use the body universe to interact with the external universe, stabilizing control over life and death
3. Subdue and control other people

6. Capturing Solar Essence and Lunar Florescence

Capturing the essence of sun and moon and circulating it toward oneself is a practice where the human body merges with the sun and moon in mutual cultivation. Its complete set involves the extraction, transportation, refinement, protection, conservation and recovery of the self to the point that you are restored to your original state. It is a method of retrieving cosmic energy, a Daoist way of cultivating perfection, a way that leads to the state when heaven and humanity become one. Practitioners use their body universe to interact with the natural universe, causing the body universe to unite with the heavenly. This is accomplished by stealing the innate essence of the sun and moon, which in turn repairs one's primordial *qi* in the body. It, too, divides according to the three vehicles: first standing, then moving and finally and sitting. In ancient times, this was also known as "absorbing the *qi* of the sun, absorbing the *qi* of the moon".

7. Energy Balancing and Standing Poses

This refers to Daoist techniques of external movement, matching what old texts call the arts of absorbing and expelling. Practitioners circulate energy throughout the body and limbs together with a strict breathing regimen, closely coordinating intention with *qi,* then using the orifices of the body to intermingle with plants, animals and people with life force and in perfect balance. Thus they are known as energy balancing practices.

Energy balancing practices are mainly used for focusing energy within the body, so that it can be sent and received freely. They mingle human microscop-

ic substances and bio-electricity and appear both as physical exercises and a method to treat diseases by transmitting external *qi*. They automatically regulate any internal imbalances and lead to complete health. Practitioners can also balance the condition of the patients by using techniques of life force, after having first diagnosed their condition.

They come in three vehicles. The lesser vehicle is a practice of transmitting and receiving, removing illnesses and gaining health. The middle vehicle is a practice used for penetrating and breaking, that is, self-defense. The great vehicle is a practice of subduing and controlling other people, and fighting evil forces to enhance goodness.

Standing poses are a form of energy balancing done by standing very still. Practitioners appear to be completely still externally, standing in one position, but internally there is a lot of movement. It is a way of using the internal universe to respond to the universe outside. It comes in nine techniques of standing, matching: Wuji, sun, moon, spring, summer, fall, winter, seven stars, nine palaces.

Standing practice is a potent method to "reverse and reflect" energies in body. Doing nothing else, you can revert illumination and recover the original state of the body. Its three vehicles involve impulse and response (lesser), externalization (middle) and reversal to the original state (great).

8. Exchanging *Qi* with Nature

This is a fundamental method to absorb *qi*. In ancient times, it was known as the natural method of absorbing *qi*. It is a Daoist practice to exchange body energy of the self with that of the universe in oneness. It requires you to be relaxed, calm, and natural as you walk about. Think intentionally, "I am the universe, the universe is changing, everything is moving, and movement generates life force." The body needs to be moving, the intention needs to be focused, so that practitioners can expand and shrink the biological electromagnetic field of the interior universe. They use this field to diagnose and heal diseases of self and others, constantly training to keep the stem *qi* revolving in the body.

9. Sleep Practice

Daoists traditionally called this "sleeping immortals' practice." The name comes from the fact that the body is in a sleeping position, quiet and restful, while the intention sets things in motion and movement and stillness combine fruitfully. This special cultivation method helps to recuperate essence, *qi,* and spirit as well as enhance the five organs and the proper flow of yin and yang in the body. It comes with a total of eleven methods.

Both, exchanging *qi* with nature and sleep practice have three vehicles:

Lesser vehicle: eliminate diseases, lengthen life expectancy and lead a healthy and peaceful life.

Middle vehicle: personal self-cultivation, suitable for everyone;

Great vehicle: destroy evil forces to enhance goodness, defend yourself and control others.

The Nine Additional Methods

These, too, are fundamental practices. In antiquity, Daoists called them magical arts, but I think that "magical" here means just a special kind of cultivation, while the term "arts" refers to particular skills. The first four methods are about helping people to attain happiness and making people obey; the remaining five are about controlling others. Here we introduce the first two.

1. Attaining Wisdom and Potential

These, as well as practices connected to inner nature, reflect special forms of cultivation based on the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* as transmitted by Lü Dongbin. Practitioners must have the guidance of an experienced teacher to learn them. They come in three vehicles:

The lesser vehicle has three parts:

1. Return to infancy and remember what was forgotten
2. Clarify what true and false
3. Make spirit and will clear and pure

The main practice here consists of three ways to open wisdom, opening the Heavenly Eye and applying the wondrous function of the Heavenly Eye. Overall, the system extends life.

The middle vehicle has three parts:

1. Know your future
2. Stop eating to enhance life
3. Change old for new clothes

Its main practices are three ways to open middle-level wisdom, the wonderful effects of fasting and abstaining from grains and stabilizing control over life and death.

The great vehicle also has three parts:

1. See through illusions to the heavenly pivot
2. Circulate around universe and world
3. Ecstatically travel to the moon

Its main practices are three ways to open the highest, cultivating the yang spirit, applying it and seeing its wonderful effects, as well as subdue and control other people, finding happiness and long life.

2. Eliminating Diseases

Here practitioners of internal cultivation perform the method of rescuing the person from disease and suffering. Nowadays we speak of diagnosing diseases in the body. Practitioners first learn the various methods of wisdom and potential, then move on to eliminating diseases. This is the correct way to proceed. The method divides into three vehicles, which consist of nine steps:

The lesser vehicle has three: circulation, piercing through *qi,* and guiding *qi.* All these are diagnostics that use receptive sensing of someone's energy to diagnose an illness. Practitioners who work with the lesser vehicle methods of the energy balancing will have greater precision and be without error.

The middle vehicle works on the three areas of meridians, vessels, and bone pathways. It involves diagnostic methods that use the life force to remote sense a patient. Practitioners who are good at the three methods concerning the meridians, vessels and bone pathways will be most accurate.

The great vehicle centers on the lymphatic system, internal observation and X-rays. They work with remote sensing, using the life force and the methods of balancing yin and yang to enable internal observation and seeing like an X-ray. Practitioners must apply the methods of wisdom and potential to make sure that the three steps of the great vehicle are applied precisely.

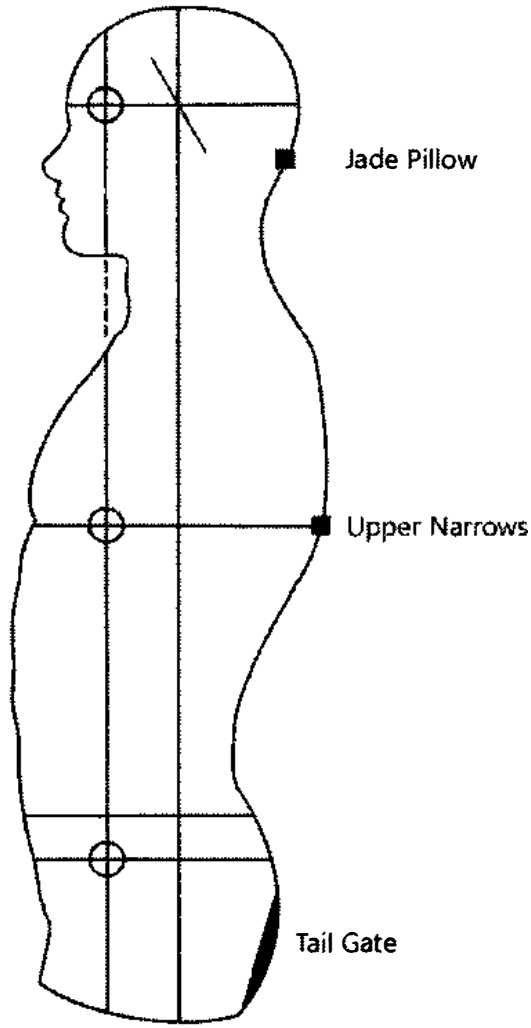
The Internal Landscape

Daoists believe that the body has three energy barriers along the back. To open and pervade them, they use special practices. In addition, there are also six major energy lines in the body, which match the three elixir fields (upper, middle, and lower) and four areas (two each in the head and pelvic floor). The barriers and lines form the foundation of all Daoist internal practice. Both the Southern and Northern schools of internal alchemy have similar visions about them but implement them with different techniques. The Northern school emphasizes the primary cultivation of inner nature, followed by that of life-destiny. They say, "Repairing the road before building the house." The "road" here refers to the work needed to establish the internal energy lines. The Southern school, on the other hand, begins by cultivating life-destiny, then practices inner nature afterwards, a feature also called, "Building the house before repairing the road."

The Three Barriers

There are three barriers on the back of the body known as Tail Gate (sacrum), Upper Narrows, and Jade Pillow. The sacrum is at the tip of the spine, in an area that has seven joints and aseven acupuncture points. Practicing internal cultivation results in opening the passageways through them.

The sacrum and the acupuncture points of the right and left kidneys connect through a passage, the kidneys being the place where essence is stored. Essence moves up through this passage. Known as Bubbling Creek and also called River Carriage, it is the road of ascending yang *qi*. Straight up from the seven joints and between the two kidneys, is the barrier called Upper Narrows.



Upper Narrows is also known as Dual or Middle Barrier. The acupuncture point is located in the eleventh thoracic vertebra, which internal *qi* has difficulty passing. Once the *qi* gets stuck between the two kidneys and does not move, you need to use rapid fire to raise it. At the same time, you match your breathing pattern to the time of day, deciding if and when to do a long inhalation followed by a short exhalation, or vice versa.

By the same token, you decide when and whether to focus energy in the lower abdomen, in the old days called the wind of the trigram Xun, a technique also known as advancing or drumming up the wind. In short, it is important to seize good wind, fire and conditions at the right time. Moving up from the Upper Narrows is the barrier of the Jade Pillow at the back of the head, the acupuncture point Numinous Wind.

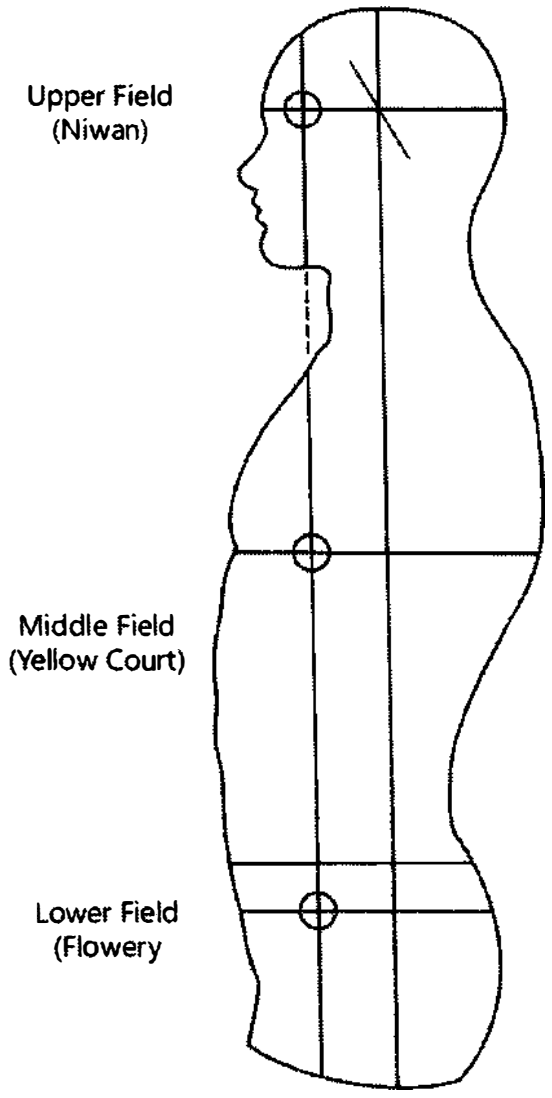
The gate of the Jade Pillow is also known as the Iron Wall; it is located at the back of the head. The opening is small and hard to open. "In order to open the opening, let the tongue push against the upper palate, visualize the Crown Gate and coagulate the fire in the spirit furnace. Let the fire continuously push against the barrier and it will open." If you are too engrossed with the upward movement of the *qi* at the neck, you will try to open the barrier with force. In this case, do not coagulate the fire from spirit furnace, because the gate will not

open. On the contrary, this might cause harm. Perhaps the *qi* is overflowing in the cerebral ventricles, which causes dizziness. Or it has fallen to the bottom of the well, which means its head will be cut off. A headless *qi* is a deviation, which means that *qi* moves up from the bladder to the shoulders, but it does not pass into the head. Instead it drops back down and eventually causes kidney failure. Many of the heavenly circuit methods potentially have this harmful effect.

The first process of forming the immortality elixir in Daoist cultivation is to open these three barriers. Once they are open, yang *qi* moves up to the Niwan center in the head and from there drops into the mouth and body, establishing elixir circulation based on the jade and golden fluids.

The Three Fields

Originally people do not have these fields. They form the practice ground needed to develop the internal lines and by definition are places where two lines intersect. Just as an ox plows a field, when it continues to do so for a long time without tiring, eventually it forms a cross section. This cross section can be large or small, even fitting within a square inch, marking what we call a field. In ancient times, this process was described as "the iron marks the field." The areas, then, where the broken line as well as the lines of inner nature, strength, and destiny-cultivation intersect are known as the upper, middle, and lower fields.



The upper field is called the Niwan Palace as well as by various other names. Here primordial spirit is stored. The middle field is called Earth Cauldron or Yellow Court. It is a cavity of emptiness, with a circumference of 1.2 inches. Here *qi* is stored.

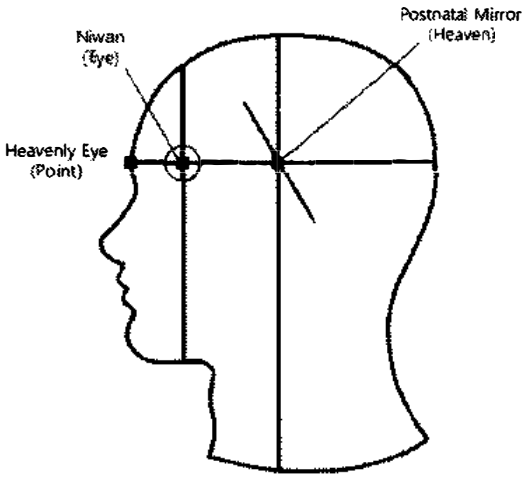
It is the cauldron where the elixir is concocted. The lower field is called the Flowery Pond, yet another cavity of emptiness, with a circumference of 1.2 inches. Here essence is stored and the medicine is collected. Located between

navel and kidneys, this 1.2 inch spot it also called Crescent Moon Furnace or the Ocean of *Qi*—different from the Cavity of *Qi*.

The Six Lines

The *Neigong shu* focuses on six energy lines inside the body.

The Inner Nature Line connects the eyebrows or the Heavenly Eye with the Jade Pillow at the back of the head. Its opening leads outside, but the eye is within and heaven forms its internal structure. When a person is born, there is a vertical gap in front of the forehead, the frontal suture, with a different length for everyone. As people grow older, this eventually grows together.



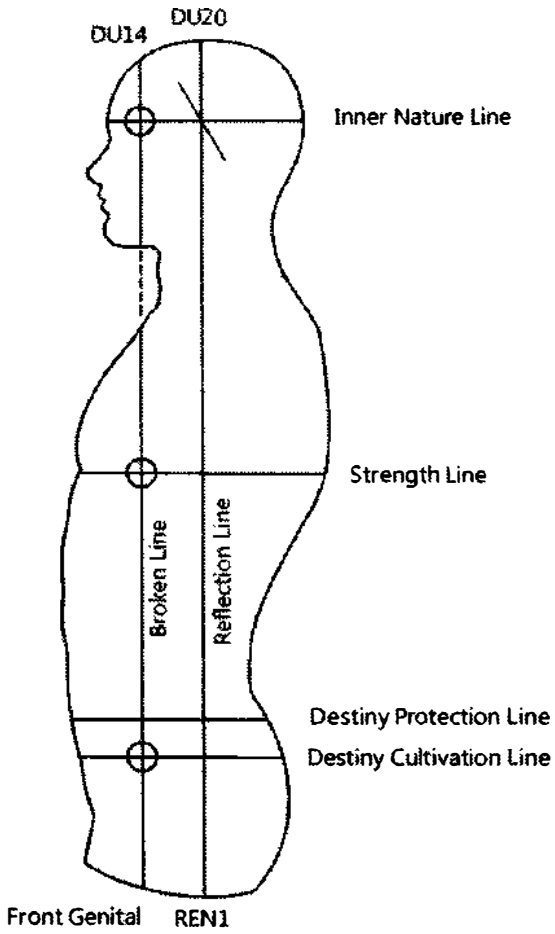
However in-between there is an acupuncture point and thus it was called "cavity" in the old days. Called traditionally the Hall of Light, is one inch inside the head. Further in, at two inches, is the Cavern Chamber and one more inch deeper is the Niwan Palace. The Postnatal Mirror, finally, is six inches inside from here. The point opens naturally and can be accessed by acupuncture and moxibustion. Like the third eye, it is the door way of spirit light. The Niwan Palace is 1.2 inches in circumference, one of the orifices of life force and the storehouse of primordial spirit. It is also known as the "Eye."

The Postnatal Mirror is located in the center of the brain, between the cerebellum and the midbrain, where a small crack conceals it. Its shape is like that of an inclined plane; it connects to the spinal cord and this is where the prenatal and postnatal existence, where the spirit light of the body connects to that of heaven. Thus, it is also called "heaven."The Heavenly Eye looks like a single entity, but in fact it has three orifices. Originally known as the Heavenly Heart, its name was changed by the immortal Lü and it closely matches the heavenly bodies of sun, moon and stars. The sun and moon are the left and right eyes, while the stars refer to Northern Dipper, also known as the Heavenly Net and the Heavenly Stems. Old texts on secret elixir methods commonly represent it with three dots.

Chapter 1 of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* has Lü Dongbin say that the Heavenly Heart indicates the three points of the three-dot opening. Also described as the Mysterious opening, it is present as a third eye in everyone. The virtuous and wise open all these eyes, while those ignorant and deluded close them. Long life occurs by opening them; early death occurs by closing them.

The midpoint among the three is located between the left and right eyebrows; their left point is stored in the left eye and their right point in the right eye. Ideally you use spirit light to internally look with both eyes to the midpoint between them. The space between the eyebrows is the Heavenly Eye, where the light of the three heavenly bodies returns. Ancient texts on elixirs say that this is the point where the sun and moon merge. The Heavenly Eye is a practice center common to Daoists, Buddhists and Confucians.

The Strength Line connects the center of the chest (xiphoid process) with the Upper Narrows (T-11). Used to strengthen the tendons in the body, it is mainly activated in the practice of hard qigong and external fighting. When cultivating the internal lines, there is no need to work on it right away. Rather focus on energizing the inner nature and destiny-cultivation lines above and below it.



The Destiny-Protection Line begins at the navel and passes through the center of the body to the Gate of Life. The navel contains the Spirit Tower, that is, the prenatal orifice of brightness and the perfect place of nurturing life. It is also the one place where the postnatal energy passes on its way to prenatal potency.

The Destiny-Cultivation Line is the connecting line between the Ocean of *Qi* and the sacrum, located 1.2-1.5 inches below the navel.

The Reflection Line indicates the connection between the Hundred Meeting (Baihui; GV20) point at the top of the head and the Meeting Yin (Huiyin; CV1) point at the perineum. It is the body's *ziwu* line. In medicine, it is called the Thrusting Vessel and also the Central Vessel.

The Broken Line indicates the connecting line between the Heavenly Gate and the front genitalia. The Heavenly Gate, also known as the Canopy of Heavenly Force, is located three inches above the Niwan Palace. Here the original and the yang spirit come and go to communicate with us.

At the front genitalia the body's liquid waste is discharged, and we lose our essence. Men have one opening, women have two. In the past, generations of immortals and Buddhists did not cultivate this life practice. There are two breaks in this line.

The first is underneath the space between the eyebrows and above the palate in the mouth. Inside the nostrils, there are two orifices that are hidden and secret. One is empty, the other is full. The full or strong opening leads to the road of internal *qi* cultivation, while other is a place where energy easily leaks out.

For this reason, the two orifices are called the Golden Bridge, also known as the Upper Magpie Bridge. In order to seal the leakage of the nostrils, a nose clip should be used. To connect the Conceptual and Governing Vessels, the tongue should push against the upper palate. If you wish to connect the large or small heavenly circuits, use the tongue to join them together. That is why the tongue needs to be placed in this area, the Upper Magpie Bridge. Otherwise it is hard to form the heavenly circuit. The second break in this line is in the throat area, which divides into twelve segments, traditionally known as the Twelve-storied Tower.

The Four Areas

The four areas are points where the inner nature, strength, and destiny-cultivation intersect with the broken line are the three elixir fields. They are prime areas of cultivation, to be worked on in conjunction with the following four areas.

The Heavenly Gate Area is also known as the inner nature area or the area of life force. Found and established in the upper elixir field, it opens upward to form a gateway to heaven.

The Reflection Area is also called the cerebellum and is located in the same place as the Postnatal Mirror. It is used to control the angle from the Heavenly Eye to aim for and circulate spirit light, thus to internally observe the body.

The Front Genital Area is also known as the area of essence and blood. Men use it to keep, strengthen, recover and bring back essence into the body as well as circulate the five phases. Women use it to increase their blood circulation.

The Rear Genital Area is also called the area of life. It connects the ischium and perineum. Both the front and rear genital areas have two orifices, one empty and one full. The full one opens to the path of moving internal *qi,* while the empty one is the place where internal *qi* easily leaks out. To activate the heavenly circuit, the leakage of the Magpie Bridge in the mouth should be sealed as much as that of its lower counterpart in the rear genital area, also called Magpie Bridge. This is best done by sitting on the perineum and mentally sealing the three lower genital orifices.

Chapter Three A

Internal Structure

In ancient times, people observed astrological phenomena to determine yin and yang with the purpose to create times based on the eight trigrams. In the process they found that the moon rotates around the earth, completing one cycle per day, which is why it is called the heavenly circuit. When ancient Daoists started to train in exchanging their *qi* with that of the heavenly bodies, they found that the internal *qi* of the body was also in motion and corresponded to the heavenly circuit. They then named this internal circuit "one heavenly circuit." This laid the foundation for the theory of oneness of heaven and earth and also of the idea that humanity forms an integral part of nature. Thus the theory of the heavenly circuit came about.

The Heavenly Circuit

Daoists had an early theory about the heavenly circuit, namely that when the earth revolves around the sun once, it completes one heavenly circuit. The body circulates in accordance with the sun and practices that open the twelve meridians match this. The moon revolves around the earth for one lunar month. The body is like the earth, so that when we perform practices to cultivate and refine yin, yang, water and fire, we start our communication at the same time as the heavenly bodies, i. e., in the morning and evening (*mao*, 5-7 a.m.; *you*, 5-7 p.m.). The earth's surface transforms and gives rise to planetary vibrations. As you match your body's vibrations to those of the earth, cultivation of the secret body proceeds automatically.

From this we can see that there are various heavenly circuits, depending on the route of the *qi* pathway. They can be subdivided according to morning and evening, small and large. Each circuit, moreover, depends on the various properties of moving *qi,* leading to yet another division according to whether they follow the intention, the meridians, the extraordinary vessels, or the path of the elixir. The chant is a poem:

> The intention-based circuit matches people's imagination,
> That based on meridians is like a wide expanse.

The circuit of the extraordinary vessels matches a single line,
While that moving along the elixir path is a single point.

The intention-based heavenly circuit uses the imagination. Some so-called heavenly circuit practices claim that it can be opened within a few hours, but that is all based on imagination. When people create a circuit of this type in their body, they tend to generate harm rather than benefit and easily suffer from energy disturbances and mental disorders.

A meridian-based circuit means that the heavenly circuit is formed by circulating *qi* through the meridians. It moves through a large area because it simultaneously opens the three yang meridians and also goes into the opposite direction and opens the three yin meridians. For this reason, it can easily deviate from the intended path.

A circuit based on the extraordinary vessels is a heavenly circuit formed by circulating *qi* through the Conception and Governing vessels. The movement here is in a straight line. A circuit that follows the pathway of the elixir, finally, uses a point in the center of the extraordinary vessels and from there moves around, going back and forth.

Heavenly circuit practices should be undertaken during the correct hours every morning and evening, practicing the small and large circuits in progression, because the former forms the basis of the latter. Prior to using the circuits, one must lay the foundation by cultivating the dynamics of the five phases. Only after the *qi* of the five organs is completely full, should one combine the practice with the earthly circuit and complete the heavenly circuit in the morning and evening.

After this, draw the inner nature, strength, and destiny-cultivation lines and tightly seal the three yin orifices. This will lay the foundation for the Lower Magpie Bridge. Then connect the tongue to the upper palate to build the Upper Magpie Bridge. Join the palms together and push your larynx against all ten fingers, tilt your neck forward and make the hand seal called flying the gold crystal from behind the elbows. This should touch the Twelve-storied Tower of the throat. Next focus the *qi* of the five organs in the lower field. This automatically opens the Conception and Governing Vessels. They, in turn, break through the three barriers and help opening the Heavenly Gate and Heavenly Eye. Moving down again to through the three elixir fields, the small heavenly circuit is complete. This is also known as major elixir circulation.

The heavenly circuit practices that have spread all over the world are an activation of the small heavenly circuit. However, as a result of insufficient proficiency, they often cause problems and deviations as the energy goes just up and down over the Magpie Bridge, through the Twelve-storied Tower, or up the three barriers in the back. It can lead to leakages without end at the bottom of the body: men often have nighttime emissions while women may suffer

from leukorrhea or vaginal discharge. Some people, never stopping to practice these useless circulations, may even develop kidney deficiency, lower back pain, or lack of vitality. Then again, others may fail to open their barriers and orifices, which leads to decapitated *qi,* i. e., *qi* that has not passed through the Jade Pillow but instead goes down to the shoulders. Yet others may find their *qi* coagulates in the head without ever going down, which can cause dizziness, headaches and more. Be very careful.

Each person's small heavenly circuit moves constantly every day, especially through the Conception and Governing Vessels, but it is usually too slow. We are typically unaware of the direction it moves, however, once it moves a little faster, we can feel it. There are three kinds of substances that circulate through our vessels and meridians. It is essential that we know what is moving: energy (*qi*), liquid, or solid. It makes a big difference, however, the three substances should not be evaluated according to high or low.

Completing one circuit, including the heavenly circuit morning and evening, does not mean that all diseases will be cured. To complete a circuit in the correct time and under the right conditions, you must use the proper firing times, establish a solid and strong route, but do not let the various regions become thick, rather keeping them slender. At first the proper passage of the heavenly circuit is not formed; it takes shape only with continued practice.

The Three Energies in the Body

The body is never separate from energy. Religion and modern science consider it as merely a form of temporary existence, like all things we can see with our eyes, mere appearances that gradually dissolve and fade away. If you zoom into these things to make the smallest unit visible, it becomes empty and is no longer what we see but can be anything. The physical body takes shape and dissolves, energy transforms from one kind to another.

Genetic studies show that ordinary people have has 23 pairs or 46 chromosomes, of which 22 pairs are autosomal and another pair determines the sex—XX signifying female, while XY indicate male.

A chromosome is a thread-like structure, made up of deoxyribonucleic acids, proteins and small amounts of ribonucleic acids. It is the biological carrier of major genetic material. We can see the center of a cell by using an alkaline dye, which is why it is called a chromosome. The main chemical ingredient of chromosomes is deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) plus five types of proteins called histone. Nucleosome is the most basic unit of the chromosome structure; its core consists of four types of histone proteins (H2A, H2B, H3 and H4). Two molecules from each type of protein together form a spherical polymer of eight molecules.

The DNA molecule has a typical double helix structure. One molecule looks like a long double helical ribbon and each chromosome has one DNA molecule. The double helix wraps around the surface of each eight-histone protein polymer for around 1.75 circles; its length equals 140 base pairs. Together the eight-histone protein polymer and the DNA molecule wrapped around its surface form the nucleosome. Between two neighboring nucleosomes, there is a linker DNA of 50 to 60 base pairs. There is a group of the fifth histone protein (H1) molecule in between the adjacent linker lines. Dense clusters of nucleosomes form 100 angstrom fiber in the nucleoplasm, this is the chromosome "primary structure". Here, the DNA molecule is compressed up to 7 times.

The genetic factor in this context is the basic material of hereditary, the general term for a specific nucleotide sequence of a DNA molecule that carries genetic information. It is a fragment of a DNA molecule that has genetic effect. Genes pass genetic information to the next generation by replication, which causes the children offspring to have similar traits as their parents. Human beings have about 20,000 protein-coding genes that store all information regarding life, reproduction, growth and apoptosis. They do so via replication, expression and repair to complete physiological processes, cell division, protein formation and so forth. Genes are the code of life, they record and pass on genetic information. All life phenomena, including birth, growth, disease, aging, death and so on, are closely related to the genes. Simultaneously, they also determine the internal factors of health. Each pair of chromosomes has many genes and every gene occupies a site on a chromosome called "locus". Genes are made up of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), when the DNA structure is altered in a given gene, diseases arise. Genetic diseases therefore occur clinically.

The scientific community generally believes that the difference between individual human beings depends on their chromosomes. The origin of chromosomes has been called "the book of life." Due to progress in gene sequencing, the human genome project has been clearly defined and published in 2000. Humans are the same in their genetic code to 99.99 percent; the difference between individuals is only 1 part in 10,000. Research findings show that within "the book of life", certain complete "paragraphs" and even entire "pages" are being repeated. Research also found that every human gene is not the direct product of reproduction that comes from father and the mother, but there may be quite a large number of replicas. This number differs due to individual differences. A large number of replication in some genes that constitute a given chromosome determines the difference between people. These findings suggest that human characteristics are not only the result of simple DNA changes, but in many cases can be considered as a consequence of structural differences in the chromosomes. Each one of us has his or her unique model, owning entire DNA segments; this means that the difference between us and our loved ones

is really much greater than previously thought. Some abnormal duplication or the possession of some important genes, then, may be the cause of severe diseases.

Scientists only know about half the functions of any gene within the human genome, so they still have a long way to investigate the function and expression of human genes more thoroughly. Although certain genes may be associated with specific diseases, it is not known how exactly they relate to each other. The only way to proceed is to examine the difference in the human genome and search for genes that most easily cause diseases in different people. However, so far gene diagnosis and treatment is their infancy as documented in modern scientific research.

Daoists believe that people have three energies coagulating in the body: original, transmitted or inherited, and cosmic. These three are not fixed; they can convert into each other. They also rely on each other and are interdependent; they closely connect to each other and are mutually indispensable. They have to stay balanced in the body. To achieve a dynamic balance among them, none of them must be too large or too small: if you lack one, you will become a very strange person, indeed. Also, if one of them is skewed, the person will have problems. Basically, original and cosmic energies join together and get passed on to become transmitted energy, so their matching and conversion must be carefully balanced.

Original energy is present in the physical body. It comes from the joining of the semen of the father and the blood (egg) of the mother. However, it is not the same as mere physical body energy, because the physical body only exists from birth to death, is temporary and impermanent. Thus, the physical body is merely an apparent phenomenon. Daoists believe that original energy is essentially unrelated to the physical body and that, as long as we know of a person, his original energy continues. Although we have not met our ancestors physically, we know they have given us many memories and the original energy of the family is still there. On the other hand, our ancestors gave us something that even our parents and grandparents may not be aware of.

Children may not necessary know their parents well and still have awareness of the things given to them from prior generations, which is their inherited original energy. However, as long as we are alive, the physical body is the only form considered real in society. At this time the physical body is real and manifests as a form of existence, so for the living its original energy is most important and most critical. All major religions have explored longevity over thousands of years, but their main interest has been the question of how to extend the physical existence of original energy. Daoists, on the other hand, center their effort on pure original energy, convinced that as long as it is not coagulated sufficiently, the physical body will age and not reach longevity.

Transmitted or inherited energy is today called genetic energy. Daoists believe that the genes accounts only for a very small part of the larger complex and insist that we are all joined together by transmitted energy. The space around us consists of things that are older than us and there is something in this murkiness that can tell us many things about a lot of changes. This gives rise to transmitted energy. Flowers and trees are the best teachers in this context: those just planted are already a lot older than we are. Even newly born children are already ancient: they are our teachers because we do not know whether the energy within them is older or younger than us. What is in them may well be better and stronger and bigger. In the human world, many things are due to heredity and genes, factors that are hard or even impossible to resist.

We all hope that we inherit good features from our parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and more distant ancestors and are able to identify and eliminate any bad aspects. However, this is not just our burden and even modern science acknowledges that it is unable to distinguish between good and bad genes. Daoists believe it is best is to ignore all genetics, good and bad. After thousands years of research, they have discovered a way to eliminate all transmitted energy. One way is to calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice and generally practice meditation, since any sitting meditation minimizes its impact. The most obvious presence of transmitted energy is at the coccyx or tail bone. As this area heats up during practice and becomes burning hot, transmitted energy rises to the fore. At that time, firmly decide to lift the energy up or push it down. This is a key question to solve during practice.

Cosmic energy is the energy of the three higher realms of universe, time and space. Human beings gain their energy from the universe, defined in Daoism as any place that occupies space. The body has many spaces and contains many universes. The five planets, the solar system (with its nine planets), the twenty-eight lunar mansions, the Northern Dipper, and so on are all spaces of the universe. Daoists acknowledge multiple universes, not just one. Whenever there is a space there is energy: this is cosmic energy. It has its own rhythm, as do human beings. If two rhythms or wave patterns come into contact, they can achieve harmony. When this happens between you and the universe, you can accumulate cosmic energy in the body. For example, we can adjust the human rhythm to match that of the universe by practicing the exchanging *qi* with nature and thereby reclaim cosmic energy. When this happens and often during the practice of exchanging *qi,* people feel light and airy, even dizzy. They breathe through their pores and exchange *qi,* thus accumulating cosmic energy.

Most original energy comes from the parents, with a small portion supplied by the food we eat. The parents gave us the body and the shape we have. We see and feel how diet and nutrition make us grow year by year, so many people complain that the parts they got from their parents were rather small. In fact, the parents gave us the largest part, the original energy that sustains us,

while only a small portion comes from food. Original energy can be changed, enhanced and enlarged through exercise, sleep, food and other methods, even without focused cultivation practice. It makes up the bulk of our organs and if the practice techniques are not good, only a tiny portion will ever convert into transmitted energy and only very small amounts of cosmic energy can be absorbed. Thus, you must practice the silent circulation of the five phases every day.

The existence of original energy does not depend on the body; it will be there as long as it can continue to circulate up and down. Although the bodies of Laozi, Confucius, the Buddha, and other historical figures no longer exist, their original energy is still around. It converts into transmitted energy, which in turn produces cosmic energy. It is very important and there is great danger if any one person, family, or nation, forgets their ancestors. This is because they are throwing away their original energy. The Chinese have forgotten a lot of things in the past century. This is not good.

Daoists recognize historical transmission as the affairs of the past. Once an affair has happened, it is over and its flow turns into transmitted energy. However, the problem is that future transmitted energy has not yet manifested and is still in the body forming a kind of original energy. Any energy in the body manifests in affairs and gets released, then turns into transmitted energy. Rather than letting it all go, we strive to grow original energy within.

Science has now confirmed that genetic and epigenetic transmissions form a kind of energy. Some transmitted energy comes from our parents, but this makes up only a small part as the bulk is passed down from grandfather, grandmother, and the various ancestors. Our forebears encountered all sorts of things in life, thus a certain energy moved in their bodies and later passed down to us. The *Xiuzhen tu* (Chart of the Cultivation of Perfection)[1] shows it as a "white-haired old man," indicating that even things as many as tens of thousands of years old may reappear into our bodies. Transmitted energy also comes from our teachers. We may encounter many people in life who teach us all sorts of knowledge and skills—all of this converts into transmitted energy in our body. Therefore, people in every new generation have thoughts and ideas different from those that came before. The influence of transmitted energy on us is huge and of essential importance. But it is very difficult to change and hard to deal with in life. Master Zhang Ziyang's practices are best to transform transmitted energy. Daoists believe that the food we eat also has its unique transmitted energy, often highly fraught with tensions and anxieties, especially

[1] A complete study and translation appears of this text in Catherine Despeux, *Taoïsme et connaissance de soi: La carte et la culture de la perfection (Xiuzhen tu)*. (Paris: Guy Trédaniel, 2012).

in animals, which is why Daoists often eat vegetarian. Plants come from the universe and the earth, containing large amounts of cosmic energy, which again is why Daoists eat vegetarian. The transmitted energy of animals joined with those of a person inevitably creates problems.

Cosmic energy comes from natural space. Nature here refers not only to the outside space in the world but also to that in the body, which we inhabit as part of cosmic energy. It is important to understand that cosmic energy is not outside objects but open space and heavenly bodies. Especially the sun, moon, stars, planets, and lunar mansions contain cosmic energy. Therefore, Daoists use specific training methods to absorb *qi* from the sun, moon, and stars, thereby to gain as much cosmic energy as possible. How to make the cosmic energy return to our body, what exact methods to use, from what angle to approach it, from where to move it into the body, where to direct it for optimal benefits, and how not to send it to parts where it may do harm—all these are issues requiring good specific training methods. A good method, if used strategically, will make the cosmic energy enter the body easily. In fact, we are unconsciously receiving cosmic energy every day. Without it, we would not be able to grow and become more intelligent. Cosmic space gives us energy every day; we receive it every single moment. However, we let it go too quickly, leaving just a small portion. The key is to make it stay.

These three energies all coexist in the body; they cannot be separated and each is indispensable. Your condition is optimal when they are balanced—this is what makes a person ordinary. When one gets angry or otherwise emotional, they change. When cosmic energy is larger than original energy, human affairs become invisible and you only see the cosmological dimension, thus cease to act for yourself and need to be taken care of. When it is larger than both original and transmitted energy, you cannot see anything in the present but have strong visions of the universe. You can see the Big Bang and alien beings, but you cannot see the things of ordinary life. You are limited to the bigger perspective of the universe. This matches what Laozi says in the *Daode jing* (Book of Dao and Its Power):

> Great—that means it departs.
> Depart—that means it is far away.
> Far away—that means it will return. (ch. 25)

Ordinary people have an average amount of the three energies, which is why we see the physical body of other people. However, we are also different and see different things. Each individual has his or her unique views about things so that, when we look at a particular object, we each regard it differently: beautiful and ugly, fat and slim, and so on. Everyone has a different perspective. As ordinary people, our eyes cannot see the universe but only people, affairs

and things around us, which shows that our cosmic energy is not great. The three energies show different signs of imbalance. When transmitted energy is too strong, we have no stability in our life; when original energy is too strong, we have strong limbs but a rather weak brain; when cosmic energy is strong, we need serious self-control, we must not extend ourselves lest others will think we are crazy and weird.

Daoists believe that we can change and transform these three energies at will, to modify their ratio temporarily. One of their key goals is to divert energy consciously, to change the three energies according to their intention for a certain purpose. They have various training methods that make it possible to augment or reduce a particular energy for a certain time, moving it at will.

At the same time, this does not cause problems, since Daoists will still appear to be just like ordinary people. As the saying goes, "The perfect person is just ordinary." That is the idea. It is one of the objectives we want to achieve by joining a retreat. One way of doing this is by fasting during the retreat, by ceasing the intake of physical foods, which allow us to transform essence into *qi*. Using essence and *qi* inside the body to enhance *qi* movements allows them to be released; it also helps to retrieve spirit. This is a very difficult operation. During retreat practice, cosmic and original energy compress transmitted energy. Meditating for four to five hours, it is common that participants cry bitterly and feel extremely sad. This is a manifestation of the transmitted energy as its rises to the body's surface. The greater the cosmic and original energy are, the more transmitted energy will be released. The first thing that comes to mind is the parents and we feel like we want to talk to them, giving rise to feelings of sadness or happiness. All this is the manifestation of transmitted energy. Sometimes it even manifests in terms of the past. For Daoists, it is a good thing that it manifests during practice, so that it is eliminated once and for all. Unfortunately transmitted energy resides deep in our bodies and because its cause no longer exists, it is very difficult to eliminate.

Daoists focus strongly on the transformation of all three energies as they are carried out by different kinds of *qi* and relate to the three realms of heaven, earth, and humanity. Their correspondence is shown in the table below:

Cosmic energy	Cosmic *qi* 氣	Heavenly Nature	Upper Field
Transmitted energy	Stem *qi* 炁	Karma and Retribution	Middle Field
Original energy	Fire *qi* 気	Original Source	Lower Field

The three energies thus transform into three kinds of *qi*. In other words, the three kinds of *qi* are generated by the three energies—all within our body. In the old days, this was called transforming essence into *qi*. Well known in the old days, it already appears in the medical classic *Huangdi neijing*.

Heavenly nature refers to the innate qualities or temperament a person is born with. It is a psychological and behavioral quality that is difficult to change. We are not aware of our heavenly nature and even science cannot explain it well. We do not necessarily understand when heavenly nature manifests, but we need to understand whether its manifestation is good or bad. We need to know our karmic relationship affects and how to overcome it.

Modern science can determine whether an embryo in the womb is male or female, but it can only do so after it has been formed rather than before or during the process of formation. Why do we grow up after being born? How do we grow up to have a certain appearance? Even science finds this hard to explain. When things happen without your awareness, the ancients believed it to be karma.

Karma should be explained separately. The fruit or effect is something humans can perceive and see. Humans are basically unaware of how or why it works; they do not know how future circumstances will turn out. That being said, the space or, in a larger sense, the cosmos knows the results of actions. And even though we can see the effects, we do not know the cause. People today know less than the things they know and what we know is really not enough. Original energy and the physical body are both part of the source—without it, we could not grow up nor grow into a certain appearance.

We receive our appearance from heavenly nature, which comes in part from our parents, but there is also a part that uniquely belongs to us. So what is this part based on? We were born, this is the effect; why we grow up, that is the cause; why we grow into a certain appearance, which depends entirely on the source. The source comes from the root. And Lu Xun's (1881-1936) great insight was his conviction that the root of the Chinese people is Daoism.

Daoists think that transmitted energy should not be greater than original energy; even cosmic energy should not be too great. Instead, the three energies should be maintained in a dynamic balance that can be only achieved through practice. The purpose of daily practice is to facilitate the mutual conversion between the three energies to achieve this balance. Daoists believe that only when the energies easily convert into each other can we be healthy and live long. As long as they do not convert, people will find it impossible to be healthy.

If sick people manage to practice this technique, they can turn the disease around, transform it, and reach the overarching goal of a complete cure. Of course, this is ideal. The key is whether they can locate the relevant energy and carry out the appropriate transformation. Daoists believe that, living on the edge, human beings have only one chance like this in a lifetime. There are two pronunciations and meanings for the word "edge" here. 1) *jie*: "place of intersection", "area"; 2) *gai*: something contained in a streamlined form, like a dragon in the mountains. Having a disease is a critical line, once you go over the

edge, exceed the critical boundary, it gets very scary. However, when the disease is under control and before it is entirely cured, people tend to relax and then they cannot really break through it. Eventually they get close to the edge again—this time there is no chance to turn the situation around.

The practice is well proven. Cultivators become different from ordinary folk who never sit down to meditate, having a different physiology, blood flow, brain function, body temperature, heart rate, and so forth. When some part of the body has suffered trauma for whatever reason, the person may recover, but will still feel a difference in the injured area. The wound may heal completely and not even leave a scar. This is because the physical body combines original, transmitted, and cosmic energies, gathering them all together. Therefore, Daoists insist that no part of the body should be altered or changed.

The purpose of sitting meditation is to suppress the impact of transmitted energy on your body and minimizing it with regard to other people. Attracting immortality is mainly used to adjust the rhythm or pattern of people, to conform increasingly to the rhythmic nature of the universe. Calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, next, causes original energy to encase cosmic energy, gathering it into the smallest unit and allowing it to be recovered and stored within the body. Ordinary people are not able to gather cosmic energy like this. The method is called yin embraces yang.

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* explains that applying this single point can make one see mountains and rivers. This means that this point is equivalent to a whole universe. Using original energy to encase cosmic energy allows us to recover the latter in our body, to concentrate all the energy information of the universe in one single point, opening a universe full of mountains and rivers. This is a classic Daoist way of thinking and cultivation.

Calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice helps us find our heavenly nature. After original energy is located inside the body, it is transported and passed through the Heavenly Eye between the eyebrows. In fact, what we are doing here is transferring original energy from one space to another, then combining it with cosmic and transmitted energy yet elsewhere. Once combined well, something will shine forth; it is possible to see the arrival of something bright. Where, then, does this light come from? Modern science is unable to verify it. We can see it clearly, but others cannot.

The three energies must be balanced. Cosmic energy should not be too great; however, we hope it will grow through practice, so that we know what is happening around us. Therefore, it is important to know the valley of spirit, which is where primordial spirit appears. When primordial spirit has emerged, there is life force, which should be pushed forward.

Daoists believe that supporting our parents internally is the best way to enhance transmitted energy. We were born through our parents and in our bodies contain certain aspects of them, which we allow to accumulate gradually.

These may be minute to begin with, but over time they accumulate into unique aspects of our nature. Thus, our father nature aggregates into paternal aspects, while our mother nature evolves into maternal dimensions.

Although genetic engineering is an important field, in cases of hereditary diseases, modern medicine can do nothing. Once inherited genes have switched on, people get the family disease without fail. It is, therefore, good to make offerings to deceased parents. Observe their likeness as if on an altar, remember your mother, or listen to your father's words. In this way, the genetic switch is not thrown. The World Health Organization notes that the amount of time people spend in daily meditation is proportional to their life expectancy. By observing our parents, transmitted energy increases. Parents typically do not want their children to get sick and wish their children to have the best in life. If transmitted energy increases due to practice, this will enhance their positive impact, prevent the genetic switch from turning on and, best of all, completely cut off the karmic impact of disease.

Daoists also believe that the older generation now passes fewer good things down to us because they have already used up their store. It is the same for us: we have already exhausted the good things we have; we enjoy showing off our best side to the community. As a result, what we pass on to the next generation is not so good. Daoists have a dream, a huge project: to eliminate all transmitted energy from the body. No matter if the things given by previous generations are good or bad, we do not want them. Rather, each one of us should build a completely new energy suit for ourselves, using the transformation of the three energies. Rebuilding this new "me" is the true meaning of regeneration. Real rebirth occurs when all transmitted energy has been cut off.

In sitting meditation, you are subject to transmitted energy. Sometime you may feel happy or sad when meditating for a long time, which is the karmic result of an increase in transmitted energy. Especially for young women, cultivation does not necessarily take very long, but they need to be skillful and subtle. If they practice well during meditation and transmitted energy arrives, strong emotions may arise. At this time, start observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal. That is to say, whenever you feel transmitted energy arriving, use this technique.

Observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal dissolves overly excessive transmitted energy and helps when original energy is too low. The key issue is at the Milk Flow (Ruxi) or Center Chest (Danzhong; CV17) point on the sternum between the two breasts. Whether happy or sad, immediately apply the technique of the mother of metal. Since a woman's heavenly nature is to be maternal, once the Milk Flow point heats up, press down on it, pushing its *qi* into the Big Cauldron (uterus) and from there make it return to the lower field. After entering the cauldron, it becomes more powerful, so best

let it return to the lower field. This is one formula to solve the problem of women's stirrings of love; the method is also recorded in the classics.

The exchanging *qi* with nature and pacing the seven stars are methods that allow cosmic energy to enter our body. The first is also a basic technique to refine original energy and make it intermingle with, and transform into, cosmic energy. Energy balancing practices are a way to partner with an opposing object, such as a tree. It creates a form of mutual resistance between me and the other. You intentionally take the original energy of the tree into your body and make it your own. When working with large trees much older than ourselves, the energy we absorb may also contain transmitted energy. Overall, energy balancing practices serve mainly to gather original energy in the body, becoming able to receive and send it out freely.

Only after internal energy can be received and sent freely, can it be transformed and transported to the various organs. Transmitted energy is located in the spine, while cosmic energy is in the air; thus, it is difficult to build a foundation. It is the best to think of a way to synchronize the physical body energy and cosmic energy. You can synchronize in three places, through the movement of the elixir field, the vibration of the universe, and the vibration of the pores. This synchronizes energies in three centers. After synchronization, the three energies will easily transform and convert. Several ancient classics, such as the *Huangdi neijing* (Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor), the *Huangdi neijing suwen* (Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor: Simple Questions), and the *Yijing*, contain theoretical details on how to transform essence into *qi*, one way to transform the different energies. After the three centers are synchronized, the individual has good control over himself. Similarly, when we can transform essence into *qi* easily, we can also move our essence, *qi* and spirit with ease.

Spirit and the Life Force

The *Daode jing* has,

> Heaven attains oneness and gains clarity.
> Earth attains oneness and gains stability.
> Spirit attains oneness and gains life force. (ch. 39)

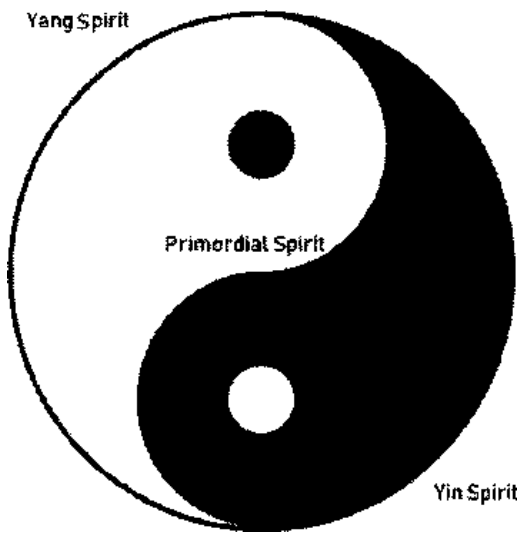
Laozi also said, "Dao generates the one" (ch. 42). What is Dao? In every part of the *Daode jing*, Laozi speaks of it differently. He does not know it clearly. "I do not know its name. To call it something, I speak of Dao" (ch. 25). However, it is still the source of all things.

> Dao generates the one.
> The one generates the two.

The two generate the three.
The three generate the myriad things. (ch. 42)

"Spirit attains oneness and gains life force." While we are present in the physical body, we manifest spirit in both its yin and yang forms, gaining life force from both. Primordial spirit, then, is the adhesive or the catalyst that holds together and supports the other spirit dimensions. It is eternal and ubiquitous: nothing does not have it. As long as people are alive, spirit is present within them. Even the dead still have the three kinds of spirit, at least as long the corpse is still there and has not yet been cremated. In fact, they are the most balanced here.

As a corpse slowly starts to decay, there is still something there and this something is advanced and at a high level. However, Daoists believe that this is not good, you still can see me as I was in life. They believe these three kinds of spirit should be transformed into one *qi*—this is the highest level. Once this happens, you can no longer see me, but I—as pure spirit—would be able to see you.



Yang spirit manifests when we are mentally clear and fully awake and helps us control our original energy. It can emerge from the body, is both related to and not related to it. It can also exert control over the body, for example, in urination and defecation.

Yin spirit manifests when a scene appears in our mind without conscious effort, thinking, or intention. This can be amazing or scary. It rests in the sphere beyond the Great Ultimate, a sphere that looks much like a big mouth.

Primordial spirit exists on the line between yin and yang. Beyond intention and awareness, we have no control over it. It supervises our unconscious functioning. Within the body, it makes our heart beat, our blood circulate, and the various other organs function. Although we can reduce the heart rate or even stop it beating for a moment, for example, by holding the breath or changing the blood pressure, the primordial spirit is still basically uncontrollable, however much you may wish to use conscious spirit to master it.

Conscious spirit is understood in a straightforward manner by all teachers and patriarchs. It plays only a minor role, moving about in the worldly sphere, matching time and space, going along with moods and temperaments. It mani-

fest in the seven emotions and six desires. It can move both outside and within the body, can be at top or bottom, and can determine the track of sun and moon. It manifests most intensely at the external orifices (eye, ears, nose, and mouth) known as the "gateways" (orifce of brightness).

Life force, primordial spirit, and conscious spirit are three forces you cannot do without. Primordial spirit is the master of conscious spirit, which in turn is its executive agent. Primordial spirit is the ruler; conscious spirit is the minister. Once primordial spirit gives instructions, conscious spirit has to obey. Without primordial spirit, people lack inspiration; they are basically fools. Conversely, if conscious spirit directs primordial spirit, limbs and feet do not function well. Spirit is not nerves, which are a material entity; it has neither ingredients nor matter. Spirit light, the manifestation of primordial spirit, is the life force of the body. In antiquity, highly evolved masters were utterly full of spirit. Primordial spirit firmly returned to their body, resting beyond yet encompassing their life force, which they never allowed to leave. Ordinary people only know conscious spirit when it gets active through the seven emotions and six desires. If people could only let conscious spirit rest in nonaction, they could let it become full and would no longer suffer from fatigue.

The *Daode jing* recognizes that the life force exists forever. After death, even though the physical body is no longer there, it still continues. The physical body is just a form of temporary existence, given to us through the parents while sustaining primordial spirit. Daoists believe that human beings are born with nine tendencies that run against goodness. Still, they have a strong saying that "people at birth are fundamentally good." This means that our physical body is naturally good, but it does not tell us whether life force and primordial spirit are essentially good.

People are different from birth in terms of gender, mental capacity, health conditions (some are born with disabilities), and more. In fact, they are already different in the womb. Without primordial spirit, they are naturally good, but once it has been stimulated and conscious spirit takes action, they are not necessarily good any longer. Even children do something wrong occasionally.

When communicating with others through basic life force, a childlike innocence appears. Daoist lessons are full of children or young Daoists. Although they may just be sitting there, listening without understanding, they yet intuit what you say in their hearts and feelings. So, when you lecture about something happy, they smile. They understand, get the right feeling and thus their childish innocence is aroused.

Many Daoist classics describe the three forms of spirits and their relationship. A key example is found in the *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* (Collected Transmissions of Zhongli and Lü, in DZ 263, chs. 14-16),

When the light of the life force enters the body, it does not come through your mother.

Being dull and ignorant throughout life comes from a lack of light in the life force. Because of this, you constantly encounter bad luck and obstacles, darkness and a reduced life expectancy. Transmigrating with no awakening, falling deeper from age to age, you lose yourself in scattered details, your life force passing through an empty shell.

Stuck in the world, forever giving rise to yin and yang, you become a ghost of plain life force, nowhere near an immortal of pure yang. If you can focus your will and keep the life force from scattering, you can become an immortal after death. (ch. 1, "On Perfect Immortality")

If perfect *qi* scatters and causes primordial yang to be lost, it gets exhausted and strong yin arises. The primordial spirit leaves the body: this is death. (ch. 7, "On Water and Fire")

The kidneys generate *qi,* which contains the water of perfect oneness. As you circulate this water into the lower field, your essence will nurture the root of the life force [sexual desire] and *qi* arises from here. The heart generates fluid, which contains the *qi* of perfect yang. As you circulate this *qi* to the middle field, your *qi* will nurture the numinous source and spirit arises from here. Gather the life force and turn it back into spirit, then harmonize spirit to enter Dao. Use this to concoct the superior elixir and transcend the world. (ch. 13, "On Elixir Circulation")

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* similarly notes,

When human beings are set free from the womb, primordial spirit resides in the square inch [between the eyebrows], while conscious spirit resides below, in the heart.

Now, this flesh body and emotional entity depend entirely on conscious spirit. Closely related to yin fire, it is yet ultimately silent, empty and nothing. Primordial spirit in contrast is perfect inner nature, it comes from the trigram Qian (heaven) and also relates to fire, but this is heavenly fire.

The perfect inner nature of unified life force descends from the palace of heaven (Qian), then divides into spirit (cloud) and material (white) souls [animus and anima in Wilhelm]. The spirit soul resides at the center of heaven; it is yang in nature and consists of light clear *qi.* It comes from supreme emptiness and shares its appearance with primordial beginning. The material soul is yin, consists of heavy and turbid *qi* and is attached to the physical body.

> The spirit soul likes life, whereas the material soul looks toward death. All feelings of lust and passion come from the material soul: it is conscious spirit. After death, it enjoys feeding off of blood, but when reborn undergoes great suffering. Yin always reverts to yin, similar things gather together. Students [of Dao] fully refine the yin of the material soul, transforming it into pure yang. (ch. 13, "On Elixir Circulation")

> If you can kill of your [feeling] heart, your primordial spirit will live. To kill the heart does not mean letting it dry out and wither. Rather, it means being single minded and not divided. (ch. 4, "Circulating Light and Regulating the Breath")

In addition, the *Wupian lingwen* (Five Chapters of Numinous Writings; JY 202) states,

> Primordial spirit is of perfect life force. It neither arises nor perishes, rots nor spoils. It is not at all the mind of vain thoughts and delusional imaginations. The heavenly mind is the ruler of primordial spirit; primordial spirit is a wondrous function of the heavenly mind. Only when the heart dies can spirit come to life. (Preface)

From these classical passages we can see that for primordial spirit to be transmitted through life force it needs the three forms of spirit received from the parents. Without the physical body, primordial spirit cannot exist; it needs the body to rely on. Still it is ours to control, and once we settle down and become calm, it stabilizes. As long as we are active, it remains agitated, giving rise to the seven emotions and six desires, which are a function of conscious spirit. This is what ordinary people use to gain happiness. Daoists, on the other hand, apply various techniques and find happiness through primordial spirit.

How, then, does primordial spirit relate to our physical constitution and original nature? Releasing a living being as a form of repentance or atoning for past transgressions has nothing to do with this. On the other hand, abstaining from killing and eating less meat will have an impact.

Primordial spirit cannot be separated from conscious spirit, but this has nothing to do with whether the eyes are open or closed. People may be blind (no eyes) or deaf (no ears) and live in a world of their own, but they still use conscious spirit to perceive the world. The blind use it to feel the world even with no sight, while the deaf use it to hear the world even with no hearing. Conscious spirit exists both within and outside of the body and in both places it is in constant motion. Primordial spirit can be activated by opening the eyes, but whenever you are absent-minded, you will just not be aware of things. When people deal with affairs unconsciously, they do not use their primordial

spirit but are controlled by another spirit, which accounts for 80 percent of people's doings.

As long the physical body exists, primordial spirit is there; conversely, without the physical body, it vanishes. Religious followers believe that there are three kinds of incarnation:

1. The incarnation of the physical body through the transmission of genes, which accounts for one lifetime.

2. The incarnation of spirit, manifest by attaching itself to an entity above the body, which happens only for one short moment.

3. The incarnation of the life force, found in figures like a living Buddha or immortal, which occurs without limit. Primordial spirit depends on the life force to incarnate, involving three factors, also including the parents. Any life force we have is given to us by the parents under the auspices of primordial spirit and it is ours to control.

If conscious spirit is dominant, primordial spirit is not present. During sitting meditation, primordial spirit descends and brings about a state of freedom from thoughts and imagination. This means conscious spirit is absorbed in primordial spirit. If there is anything to think about, primordial spirit lets conscious spirit act in whatever way it wants. People have a very hard time not talking. This is because the eyes can see out and seeing leads to desire, which in turn longs for expression. Longing and desire are not the same. Desire means three things:

Wishing to obtain something or to achieve a certain purpose; hoping for or wanting something; and strongly needing something. Desire mainly refers to needs related to human survival and pleasure; it belongs to the category of physiological activity.

Longing means: deeply hope and expect; set the mind on achieving something or fulfill a certain purpose; follow your hereditary instincts, the urge to obtain something or achieve a certain purpose.

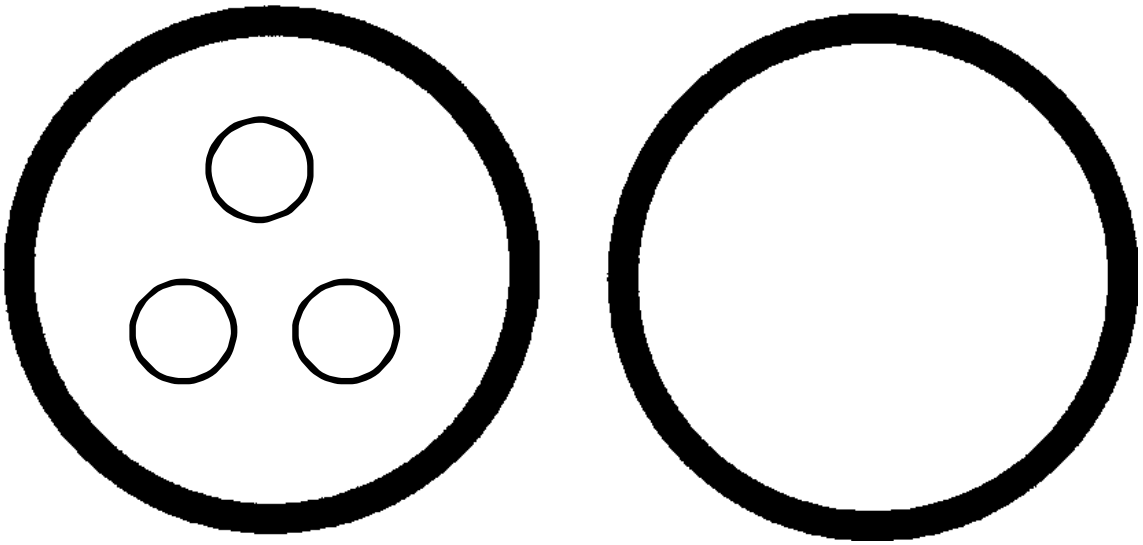
Longing always manifests with urgency. When primordial spirit feels desire, conscious spirit may or may not act; when it experiences longing, conscious spirit can and will act. If conscious spirit is allowed to grow bigger, it may get even larger than primordial spirit and will start to influence it. When your legs hurt during meditation, ask: Is it primordial or conscious spirit that causes this discomfort? Why don't children experience the same thing when they sit to meditate? During cultivation, it is most important to attain a deep calm, which will allow primordial spirit to settle down and become very stable. Using the orifices of brightness and chants are one way to deepen conscious spirit and reabsorb it into primordial spirit. Then, as you sit in meditation, primordial spirit may come to control conscious spirit.

The teachers and patriarchs have written variously about the forms of spirit—primordial, yang and yin, but they all have something different to say.

The three kinds of spirit rise up as we cultivate to a certain level. If you use the methods of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, your primordial and yang spirits rise to a very high level compared to beginners or non-practitioners, whose three forms of spirit are rather low. This is the main difference between practitioners and ordinary folk.

The three kinds of spirit within our body arise from the life force. We practice with our eyes looking straight ahead and do so without conscious intention. This is a way of seeing that harmonizes the three forms of spirit. We look at things but cannot recall what we have seen: that's perfectly ordinary; we are gathering sensory impulses without actually seeing anything. When we meditate while facing a wall and actually see an object (the wall) before us, conscious spirit is too strong. When we see something beyond the wall, it is pure imagination. When we do not see anything beyond (the wall), that is also incorrect. The only correct way is not to see anything.

Close your eyes and turn your vision inward. Observe the top of your head, then move down, always using spirit, *qi* and life force—using the terms of Patriarch Lü, who never wrote about yin and yang spirit. He says, "The three forms of spirit are always with me; conscious spirit walks with me in the three treasures." The first three treasures are sun, moon, and stars; another set is essence, *qi,* and spirit. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* says: "The left eye is the sun; the right eye is the moon; between the two eyebrows is the mysterious opening." Use conscious spirit, so you always walk with the three forms of spirit, which are is neither within nor outside of the body but both within and also outside. "It is like that and it is not like that; it is not like that and yet it is like that". It can circulate through the universe and move the Heavenly Net; it can let you know the origin and transformations of the three kinds of energy.



The potentiality of emptiness and nonbeing is the highest realm in Daoism. There is a diagram in the *Qingjing jing* (Scripture of Clarity and Stillness; DZ 620), as shown on the left above, which Master Lü called the "Chart of the

Three Items." From there, practitioners move to a higher level, shown on the right above. Here people are free from face and skin and the only thing remaining is an empty shell. In essence, I am the same no matter what you say. If I practice until any assumed identity is all gone, this opens me to the potentiality of emptiness and nonbeing. Nonbeing is the very highest level: it generates being and all that there is. When the diagram changes again to become three dots, it is complete.

Spirit Light

Daoists believe that we as humans do not understand that, while we seem to move toward a radiant future, we are in fact running toward death—a very dark place, indeed. In fact, we are rushing toward the light of the sun and moon. It is a common understanding in the lower Three Worlds, that when the parents have sexual intercourse, the moment when the sperm and the egg meet, a light appears. So there is this light before we actually come to life, but we forget all about it once we are born. Emerging into the world, we have no light; being held by our mother, we have no light. Shortly after birth, we are even afraid of it and we cannot see it.

In their cultivation, masters and patriarchs have investigated this issue: a light appears when the sperm meets the egg. However, where does it go after birth? In the process of investigation, they summed up their findings in the cultivation methods found in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. Once born, we cannot see the light, so people have no idea why they have come to life nor do they understand where they go after death. Daoists believe that in death we are going toward the same place where the light of the sun and moon return. Therefore, if people in the lower of the Three Worlds want to clearly understand death, they must first die to understand.

Daoists believe that spirit light is "the light of life and the brightness of death." To find this, they think it is necessary to refine the Mysterious Pass. To do so, they must open the Heavenly Eye. This is called "seeing one's nature with an enlightened mind." And for this, one must first see spirit light, the visible manifestation of the life force in the human body. The *Wupian lingwen* defines it by saying, "Heavenly light is spirit light" (ch. 2, "Producing Ingredients"). Similarly, the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* notes,

> The central point is between the eyebrows [Heavenly Eye], connecting to a left point in the left eye and a right point in the right eye. Thus, spirit light of both eyes comes essentially from this spot. (chapter 1, "The Heavenly Heart")

> The light of the eyes is in close interchange with the light of the sun and moon outside. The light in the ears is in close interchange with the essence of the sun and moon within. Essence, moreover, is the concentrated and fixed form of light. They emerge together, then have different names. Thus, visual and auditory perception are nothing but the light of the life force. (ch. 4, "Circulating Radiance and Regulating the Breath")

Along the same lines, the *Wupian lingwen* states,

> Human life begins with the intercourse of the parents, and people gradually take shape in the womb over ten months. Once *qi* is complete, the body is born. A bit of life-force light and *qi* of primordial yang are contained within. (Preface)

Light of Life and Brightness of Death

The ancients spoke about this in two ways, as the light of life and the brightness of death. The purpose of practice is to recognize which of the two we are facing at any given moment and whether after death we fall into hell or ascend to heaven.

Daoists believe that as we sit in meditation we are already in hell, having fallen into the underworld and are suffering deeply. Wang Chongyang said that only after we accept the suffering of hell are we ready to practice. Hell is difficult to enter, most certainly an excruciating experience. The pain must extend into our very bone marrow, becoming so strong that we change in our deepest shape and form. Without this change, you cannot really enter hell. At this time, if you think of another pain to replace it, using a different sensation to distract from it, such as pinching yourself and the like, you make it impossible. The pain in fact is of primordial spirit: don't move but cultivate in suffering.

Light of Life

If a light manifests before your eyes while suffering pain, examine it carefully as an expert would. This light is called the light of the life force or the light of life. When the pain reaches a maximum, spirit light will appear. It is the light of life. This is the most difficult; it is also called the light of rebirth. Wang Chongyang cultivated it best. He had a hard time in this process, and after a long time of practice, spirit light still did not appear. For the most part, he just saw the brightness of death. For that reason, in his later cultivation, he set himself up in the tomb of the living dead, digging deep underground. He was the first to practice in this way. Eventually he saw the light of life. He worked really hard for his insight and duly transmitted his techniques to later generations. In the same way, when we sit in meditation and have great pain, extreme pain, excruciating pain, that's when spirit life, the light of life, will appear.

Brightness of Death

There is another great time for the light to appear and that is when we are in a daze, dizzy or sleepy. At this point, it may seem as if we see the spirit light, but this is in fact the brightness of death. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* says that we should be most scared of being in a daze, dizzy, or bewildered. Whenever a light appears in such a state, it is always the brightness of death. An apparent spirit light may manifest, looking good, very beautiful, and even showing some exciting scenes, but this is still the brightness of death. It is not necessarily a bad thing and often appears first. When people are dying, it generally comes forth, and there is also an active practice to make it come, using the imagination to see it like a separate entity. We as practitioners, however, will see it earlier than at death

That is to say, the light that appears during extreme pain is called the light of life; the one we see when bewildered is called the brightness of death. In Daoist books, the two names must be separate and not even written on the same line, lest it reads "life and death, light and brightness." Their techniques are not all that different from the Buddhist cultivation of great light, however. Traditionally Buddhists speak about the pass of life and death and that of light and brightness light, which is not at all like Daoism. Life is beyond conceptualization and nobody can really understand it. Once there is some understanding, Buddhists speak of reaching the state of seeing one's nature with an enlightened mind. Death here is the submersion of the light—great concepts, indeed.

Sometimes during sleep, a light or brightness may appear spontaneously. Sometimes also a light may show up before our eyes in the middle of daily activities. In that case, we must pay close attention, lie down or stand still. If driving, stop the car or at least step on the breaks; if walking, stand by the roadside for a moment. We have to give ourselves a moment's pause since we cannot immediately differentiate whether we are seeing light of life or the brightness of death. See if spirit light is a halo-type light or a bright light and whether it comes with beautiful scenery. At times, if the scenery changes, call upon spirit; once it has entered, you can see the scenery clearly. Finally it all needs to be circulated and reverted; no matter how good or bad, collect it in the lower field.

There is a passageway that the light of life and the brightness of death follow in the body. It starts with the rotation of the Heavenly Eye and from there pursues its route toward incarnation. It is brighter at death than at birth.

Emotions, Desires, and Senses

There are seven emotions—joy, anger, sadness, fear, worry, love, and hate—and six desires, all kinds of human wants and wishes, described variously. One way is to see them as the desires of life, death, ears, eyes, mouth, and nose; another understands them as the desire to see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think.

Buddhists, moreover, define them as six sensory attractions, arising from a potential lover's face, body, carriage, voice, soft skin, and overall features.

Now, why are there only six desires and seven emotions? In most people, they are directed toward material objects and, as the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* notes, they prevent people from seeing spirit light. You cannot approach spirit light on the basis of desires and emotions, because it is the life force of the body. People always have the seven emotions and six desires and without them would not be ordinary. If they were not human, they would be invisible like spirit immortals. Even people of very high attainment in cultivation, as long as they are in the physical body, are bound to experience the seven emotions and six desires. They are necessary even to cultivate Dao.

As a human being, you are bound to experience all seven emotions and six desires; just don't let them get excessive. As long as you are better than ordinary folk, that's fine. Without them, there is also no intention or thought: you won't work hard, have no deep experiences, and will not be happy. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* classifies them according to three levels, matching the Three Worlds. It notes that emotions inevitably lead to desires, but desires do not necessarily lead to emotions. If, for example you have sex with desire but without emotion, we say that it is just a fuck, the mechanical interaction of yin and yang, purely determined by lust, going down or rising up. If, on the other hand, sex is full of both emotion and desire, we speak of marital relations.

The body, too, contains the seven emotions and six desires and, as the classics say, it also harbors husband and wife as well as yin and yang. As they interact and copulate, internal emotions and desires arise, as spirit leads them. In addition, there are seven emotions and six desires in the thirty-nine layers of heaven, as outlined in the *Xiuzhen tu* and other classical texts. These thirty-nine layers are different from the heavens modern people talk about; they are contained in everyone's body, even those of ordinary people, of the beings in the upper and middle of the Three Worlds. But here we are saying that the thirty-nine realms are different from those known at present, also exerting a different influence. They do not impact the emergence of spirit light, its collection, circulation and function. However, we need to figure out how to use it when spirit light appears.

When the texts speak of human senses as "roots," they indicate their ability to generate something. They are able to generate awareness of outside circumstances and thus are called roots. When they speak of the six roots producing the six emotions, they indicate the six kinds of sense organs or human cognitive faculties: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. The sense organs of the body, they are most sensitive in the interaction between people and the environment.

The eyes can see visible data and generate eye-consciousness: this is called the visual sense. The ears can hear sounds and produce ear-consciousness: this

is called the auditory sense. The nose can smell odors and generates nose-consciousness: this is called the olfactory sense. The tongue can taste flavors and produces tongue-consciousness; this is called the gustatory sense. The body can touch and generates body-consciousness: this is called the kinesthetic sense. The mind can understand methods and generates mind-consciousness: this is called the cognitive sense.

The six sense organs create major afflictions and bring about trouble in human life. The eyes see visible objects, the ears listen to sounds, the nose smells fragrances, the tongue tastes flavors, the body touches others (through skin contact), the mind generates meaning or images: all this leads to defilement. Defilement means pollution or contamination, coming in six forms through colors, sounds, odors, flavors, touch and thought. When the six senses interact with the six kinds of defilement, their combination generates the six kinds of knowledge: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness. When one starts to meditate, the six roots of the senses must be closed and the six forms of defilement eliminated.

The Three Perfect Spaces

Daoists believe that the body has three perfect inner spaces: upper, middle and lower. They correspond to the skull, chest, and abdomen and have three kinds of pressure: intracranial, thoracic, and abdominal—usually not in balance.

The upper space is above the shoulders (up from the neck). Called heaven, it includes the head, but it is not considered the space of the head. Rather, we speak of it as twelve dangerous stories (Buddhists call it the pagoda, complete with one vajra and a few guards). The middle space consists of the heart and lungs; the rest is the lower space. The classics speak of lungs and heart, but in fact it is the open space of their area that makes up the middle. They are the strongest organs containing transmitted energy.

Intracranial pressure is the pressure in the skull; it also refers to the pressure exerted by the cranial content against the cranial wall. Cranial content consists mainly of brain tissue and cerebrospinal fluid. Cerebrospinal fluid circulates and flows, protecting brain tissues and preventing severe imbalances in the head (due to strenuous exercise, external injuries, car accidents, and more) that might damage the skull and brain tissue. Since there is a lot of brain tissue and not quite so much cerebrospinal fluid, plus numerous capillaries in the tissues, the intracranial pressure is produced by hydrostatic pressure, which changes in the vascular tone.

Regulating physiology and metabolism, intracranial pressure maintains a dynamic equilibrium and is relatively stable. Because the skull is a bony structure, it has no elasticity. So, when the intracranial pressure is too high, the cere-

bral tissue is damaged by compression. Conversely, if it is too low, the brain tissues lose protection and there is shaking in the skull, leading to damage. The intracranial pressure is measured mainly by lumbar puncture, using a measuring tube. The ordinary range for an adult is 0.7~2.0 kPa (70~200 millimeter of mercury); for children it is 0.5~1.0kPa (50~100 millimeter of mercury).

Internal diseases or external injuries may cause the intracranial pressure to rise. For example, disease may expand cranial content and lead to an increase in intracranial pressure and brain tissue volume. If unusual substances appear inside the cranium, moreover, the cerebral blood volume increases and the amount of cerebrospinal fluid rises. Examples include brain tumors, hematoma and other lesions. Secondly, the cranial space may become smaller, through conditions like craniostenosis, greater depression fractures, and so on. High blood pressure, effusion diseases and the like may reduce intracranial volume, caused by encephalitis, meningitis, hemorrhages, etc. Then intracranial pressure may increase, causing a series of neurological symptoms due to the compression of brain tissue.

The pressure in the head is the biggest in the body and many diseases arise because it is too high. It can cause high blood pressure, headaches, vomiting, papilloedema, consciousness disorders, neuron breakdown, breathing disorders, epilepsy, insomnia, heart disease and many other conditions. It may also lead to kidney disease.

Thoracic pressure is also known as pleural pressure; it is the pressure within the potential cavity between the visceral and parietal pleural area, that is, the pleural cavity. In the overall respiratory cycle, it is always lower than atmospheric pressure and is thus called "negative intrathoracic pressure." It develops only after birth. The embryo curled in the womb has a tiny chest volume and no air inside the lungs, only a small amount of fluid. After birth, the body extends, the thorax widens due to its elasticity, and the inspiratory muscles begin to contract. Once the chest volume increases, passive expansion occurs in the lungs and air enters.

When the lungs expand passively, they also have retraction force. This force and the atmospheric pressure move in the opposite direction from the force of the pleural cavity, so the pressure in the pleural cavity is partially offset. That is to say, intrathoracic pressure equals atmospheric pressure, which is the retraction force of the lungs. Negative intrathoracic pressure comes from the elastic expansion of the thorax combined with and the fluid retraction of the lungs. They act as two opposing forces in the pleural cavity which makes sure the lungs maintain a state of expansion. The process is also important for venous blood flow.

The retraction force of the lungs consists of two parts: the elastic retraction of lung tissues and the surface tension of the alveoli. The alveolar wall contains elastic fibers. When the lung expands passively, they extend, but they

also have the tendency to recoil, occupying about one-third of the total retraction force of the lungs. The surface tension of the alveoli serves to reduce the alveolar surface area; it is also the force that causes the lungs to retract and occupies two-thirds of their retraction force. In the respiratory cycle, negative intrathoracic pressure changes according to fluctuations in the volume of the thorax and the pleural cavity.

As the thorax expands during inhalation, its tissues open passively and the retraction force increases. Thus, negative intrathoracic pressure also increases. During exhalation, both thorax and lungs retract. The retraction force diminishes and negative intrathoracic pressure decreases, but it is still negative pressure, measured in millimetres of mercury (1 mm = 0.133 kPa). During peaceful exhalation in ordinary people, intrathoracic pressure is -3 to -5 mm; in common inhalation, it is -5 to -10 mm. At its maximum, inhalation can reach up to -30 mm.

Abdominal pressure is the pressure in the abdomen. Generated by muscle contraction, it increases when the abdominal wall and the diaphragm contract, due to force, coughing, and the like. An increase in abdominal pressure commonly feels like having abdominal distention. It depends on how the heart, blood, and other bodily aspects function. As we all know, the heart is the "blood pumper" in the body. Any defect in cardiac function will impact the entire blood circulation. However, the heart is not the only factor to affect blood circulation, abdominal pressure does so, too, in addition to connecting to various physiological functions and symptoms in the body.

Abdominal pressure comes about through inhaling deeply while exhaling more shallow. Doing so, the diaphragm descends, serving as the key physiological function that maintains abdominal pressure. The body uses this to enhance blood circulation and to support all other aspects of physiology. More input and less output create an outward expansion of force: this is abdominal pressure. If it is equivalent to or greater than the atmospheric pressure, the heart pumps vigorously and blood flows to all body parts, especially also those far from the heart. If abdominal pressure is less than atmospheric pressure, the blood "takes advantage of this lapse," leading to more static in the abdominal cavity, causing fluids to drain away through urination or defecation and ultimately leading to malnutrition.

Abdominal pressure is not the same as intestinal gas. The latter comes about when abdominal pressure is low and air enters the gastrointestinal tract from the mouth and nose during intestinal peristalsis. Alternatively it develops when food has become stale in the intestines, leading to a condition commonly known as heartburn. From the above analysis, we can say that we should tighten the lower abdomen during inhalation and relax it during exhalation. In this way we can regulate abdominal pressure. Among the three spaces, the pressure in the abdomen is the smallest. Despite this it is essential since the abdomen is

the source of all life. This is also why it is soft: it generates life and blood and serves as the fountain head of all existence, the maternal origin of all.

We, therefore, come to understand that the three spaces in the body have significantly different pressure. It is highest in the skull, lowest in the abdomen, and negative in the thorax. All are under pressure due to compression and cannot release *qi*. For this reason, there are three burners in Chinese medicine and three spaces in Daoism.

Medical research shows that there should be a consistent mutual connection between the internal and the external. As it gets stronger, the brain will be healthy and support a healthy body, which in turn maintains a healthy spirit. There is clear evidence that people who psychologically fit in well with their families, communities, and the natural environment are less likely to get sick, while those in good health are less likely to exhibit anti-social or anti-ecological behavior.

The *Daode jing* says: "Empty their hearts, fill their bellies" (ch. 3). The *Chang qingjing jing* (Scripture of Constant Clarity and Stillness) has,

> When spirit is empty and rests in the lower burner,
> In essence arises a flower of lead.
>
> When spirit is empty and rests in the middle burner,
> In *qi* appears a flower of mercury.
>
> When spirit is empty and rests in the upper burner
> In spirit arises a golden flower.
> Then the three flowers gather at the top of the head.
>
> When you release all joy, the spirit soul stabilizes.
> Once it is stable,
> The *qi* of the Green Emperor of the East moves to the prime.
>
> When you release all anger, the material soul stabilizes.
> Once it is stable,
> The *qi* of the White Emperor of the West moves to the prime.
>
> When you release all sadness, spirit stabilizes.
> Once it is stable,
> The *qi* of the Red Emperor of the South moves to the prime.
>
> When you release all fear, the essence stabilizes.
> Once it is stable,
> The *qi* of the Black Emperor of the North moves to the prime.

When you release all desire, the intention stabilizes.
Once it is stable,
The *qi* of the Yellow Emperor of the Center moves to the prime.

Thus, it is said: The five *qi* move to the prime!

From this we can see that in the process of cultivation and refinement, if you want to activate the three fields in your imagination, gather the three flowers at the top of the head and make the five *qi* move toward the prime, you must make sure the pressure in the three spaces—upper, middle and lower—is perfectly balanced. This is shown in the following two charts, found in the *Chang qingjing jing*, called the *Xuwu tu* (Chart of Emptiness and Nonbeing) and *Xukong tu* (Chart of Emptiness and Open Space).

The Three Centers

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* contains a secret: there are two brains in the body that control us. The *Lingbao bifa*, too, says that people have at least two brains. However, that control does not extend to everything in human life; for example, when there is pain in the hips during meditation, it is obvious that there is yet another universe, another brain that controls us. Therefore, Daoists speak of three different versions of the universe within people:

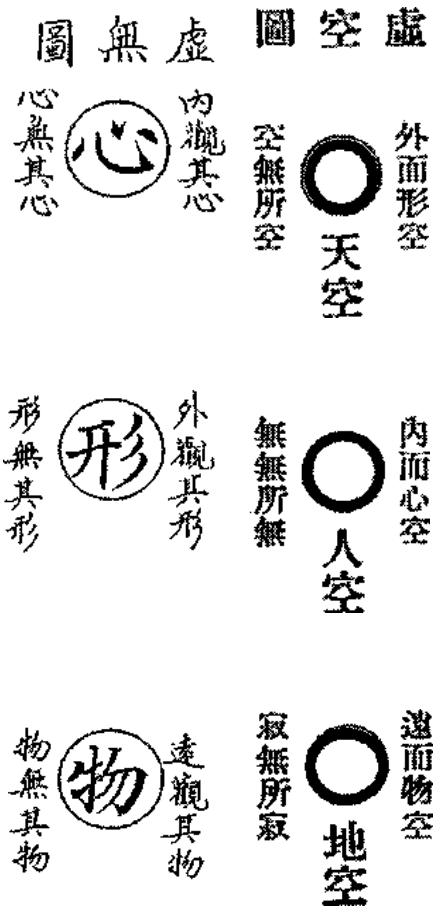
1. The heart matching heaven and the kidneys corresponding to earth.
2. The head matching heaven and the abdomen relating to earth.
3. The human level that matches heaven and an underground area that corresponds to earth. All this means is that we have brains both in the head and in the abdomen.

The abdomen contains heaven and earth as well as a head. Thus, Daoists say that people have two heads, each in charge of different things, so that it is pointless to control things relating to the abdomen by using the cerebral brain and vice versa. For example, when you have a headache, don't use the cerebral brain to alleviate it: the abdominal brain is in charge of all pain. Similarly, if your legs hurt during meditation and you instinctively use your hands to massage them, this is done by the abdominal brain. The head and abdominal brains, therefore, cannot manage the entire body but focus only on certain subsets. For the most part it remains beyond their ken. People, then, have three centers:

1. The muscular heart in the body, i.e., the heart organ that beats to a different rate in each person.
2. Its outer membrane, traditionally called the pericardium, which is not synchronized in its beating with the heart itself.
3. The center of the body, a presence at the most compressed area in the body after the pores contract, to be released by exhaling at the maximum point

of contraction. One of them is the heart of perfect, eternal existence; another is the physical heart of the body we have to expand; and the third is what activates the body. They are called the three centers.

To synchronize them, we practice as follows. While observing the breath, we sense the center of the heart with ears and eyes, feeling its steady beat. As the heart pumps, the pericardium moves and so do the pores. Synchronization means matching the beat to a certain number, for example, the heart may beat 60, 70 or 80 times per minute, which means the pericardium beats about 30 times. The pulse frequency of both is in a relationship of multiples, which holds also true for the breathing of the pores. When a Chinese physician examines the pulse, he first identifies the breathing rate, then checks the number of heart beats. Practitioners of Western medicine use a stethoscope for the same purpose.



When working to attract immortality, the purpose of focusing the mind in sitting meditation is to adjust the three centers. The first step is to become aware of the beating frequency of the heart, synchronize it first with that of the pericardium, then with that of the body. Their relationship is in multiples. It is important for the body to follow the heartbeat, which in turn follows the rhythm of the pericardium. Once the three centers are synchronized, people will be stable and calm. As the breath becomes softer, more even, and longer, the heart slowly stabilizes. Studies have shown that a meditation practice of forty-five minutes slows down circulation and optimizes thinking, increasing longevity. People automatically begin to adjust and repair themselves at this time.

The pericardium is a thin layer of film, enveloping a layer of fluid that separates it from the heart wall. It lubricates the heart muscle and prevents the pumping heart from getting injured by friction with the thoracic cavity. It divides into the serous membrane and the fibrous sack. The serous membrane consists of a visceral and parietal layer. The visceral layer lies outside the heart muscle and is also called the epicardium; the parietal layer is at the periphery of the heart. Both enter and leave through the large blood vessels of the heart. The gap between them, moreover, is called the pericardium cavity. It contains

a small amount of fluid that has a lubricating effect and thus reduces friction when the heart is pumping.

The fibrous sack is also known as the pericardial fibrous layer. It is a capsule of fibrous connective tissue that lies on the parietal layer of the pericardium. It moves upwards with the large blood vessels and closely connects to the septum. It is less flexible and tougher than the serous membrane.

The pericardium serves to protect the heart and reflects some of its functions. Even though the classic emotion of joy comes from the heart, it is reflected through the pericardium. Thus, we say that it "takes action on behalf of the heart and issues orders."

The *Huangdi neijing suwen* notes, "The gall bladder is the official residence of ministers and messengers. Joy and happiness arise here." The heart is the prime minster of the five organs and six viscera. It must never be harmed by wayward *qi*. If harmed, the resulting disease is very serious. Should there ever be an invasion of wayward *qi,* the pericardium is the first to be affected. It either deflects or reduces the harm coming to the heart. Therefore, we say that the pericardium "absorbs wayward *qi* on behalf of the heart."

The *Huangdi neijing lingshu* (Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor: Numinous Pivot) states,

> The heart..... cannot handle wayward *qi*. If forced to do so, it will be harmed. Once the heart is harmed, spirit departs; once spirit departs, the person dies. Therefore, all wayward *qi* in the heart really is managed by the pericardium.
>
> The pericardium meridian is also known as the lesser yin pericardium meridian of the hand. It connects to the hand lesser yang meridian of the triple heater, matching the relationship between inner and outer. During heat diseases, wayward *qi* is fiery hot and causes high fever, coma, delirium and other syndromes. Such conditions often center in the pericardium. They are described as the pericardium being invaded by heat. They can be treated with "pure heart opens orifices. (ch. 71, "Evil Visitors")

The body's centers have three different dimensions to be synchronized. First, the heart, pericardium and pores. Second, the lower field, body, and heavenly body, i. e., lower field (abdomen, low pressure), middle field (chest, negative pressure) and upper field (brain, the high pressure). They are all on the same line; it is best to adjust the pressure of each until they are balanced. If all six of them are activated, it is most difficult. Thus, we must first regulate it during focusing the mind in sitting meditation. It is important to adjust the breathing until it becomes very soft, superbly even, and extremely long.

Third, the three centers in abdomen and chest: universe, pores, and body. The body is solid, the pores are liquid, and the universe is gaseous. Breathing

through the pores unifies these three; it is a foremost priority. One center here remains elusive, thus there are three centers but only two intentions. This is refined by single mind and unified intention, increasingly becoming mechanized in the process.

The first step to synchronize the three centers is to create a straight line connecting the three spaces, aligning the way you think about the head and the abdomen. Daoist classics speak of practicing around midnight and specify exactly when to practice what. They in fact talk about matching the activities of the head and abdominal brains. The abdominal brain commands the one in the head, notifying it when the time is right. The cerebral brain in turn tells the abdominal, "I am ready. Please tell me what to do." Only then will it take action. This shows that the abdominal brain is very important, as is our silent circulation of the five phases. The practice makes the brain obey and pain dissolves.

There is one space is in the middle that links the two brains. The Daoist classics call it variously middle elixir field, Yellow Court, Central Palace, or Hall of Light, changing the appellation with each stage of progress. They relate the Yellow Court to the Heavenly Heart in the body and note that the middle elixir field is not an empty space. The field not being empty means that the Yellow Court must contain something and whatever it is moves into the Central Palace. This in turn has walls, surrounding an empty space. The three spaces when harmonized become one straight line and then you can hear the sound of the heart. The following table shows the matching features.

Three Layers of Heaven	Heart = heaven Kidneys = earth	Head = heaven Abdomen = earth	Edge of Universe
Three Spaces	Upper Space	Middle Space	Lower Space
Three Perfect Spaces	Cranial Cavity (high pressure)	Thoracic Cavity (negative pressure)	Abdominal Cavity (low pressure)
Three centers	Heaven	Human	Earth
Three Fields	Upper	Middle	Lower
Brains	Cerebral		Abdominal

Traditional Chinese physicians palpate the three centers. Palpating the head, they know its pressure and can discern the symptoms of the organs; palpating the hands, they know the thoracic pressure and can discern the circulation of the organs in that area; palpating the feet, they know the abdominal pressure and can discern the state of the organs in the lower body. There being three locations, each with a center that needs to be synchronized, in total there

are the three regions and nine pulses. They appear first in the *Huangdi neijing suwen*. It says,

> There are three regions: lower, middle, and upper. Each has three pulses, matching heaven, earth and humanity.
>
> The pulse in the upper region that matches heaven runs along two arteries on the forehead. They are located on the left and right sides of the forehead. Use your hands to feel them. The lesser yang meridian of the foot also runs here.
>
> The pulse in the upper region that matches earth runs along two arteries on the cheeks. They are located on both sides of the nostrils, near the edges. Use your hands to feel them. The yang brightness meridian of the foot also runs here.
>
> The pulse in the upper region that matches humanity runs along two arteries in front of the ears. They are located at the ear notch. Use your hands to feel them. The lesser yang meridian of the hand also runs here.
>
> The pulse in the middle region that matches heaven is the greater yin meridian of the hand, i.e., the lung meridian. The best place to feel it with your hands is below the palm, close to the wrist, at a point known as Passage Canal (Jingqu; LU8).
>
> The pulse in the middle region that matches earth is the yang brightness meridian of the hand, i.e., the large intestine meridian. The best place to feel it with your hands is between the thumb and index finger at the base of the palm, at a point known as Meeting Valley (Hegu; LUI4).
>
> The pulse in the middle region that matches humanity is the lesser yang meridian of the hand, i.e., the heart meridian. The best place to feel it with your hands is at the end of the lower arm bone on the inside of the wrist, at a point known as Spirit Gate (Shenmen; HT7).
>
> The pulse in the lower region that matches heaven is the terminal yin meridian of the foot, i.e., the liver meridian. The best place to feel it with your hands is outside the edge of the pubic hair, in a depression 1.5 inches below the point Sheep Arrow (Yangshi), now called Urgent Pulse (Jimai; LR12); another good location is the Five Mile point (Wuli; LR10), where the pulse can be obtained lying down. For women, the best place is Great Thrust (Taichong; LR3) in a depression two inches below the big toe.
>
> The pulse in the lower region that matches earth is the lesser yin meridian of the foot, i.e., the kidney meridian. The best place to feel it with your hands is in a depression between the rear medial malleolus and the bone, at a point known as Great Creek (Taixi; KI3).
>
> The pulse in the lower region that matches humanity is the greater yin meridian of the foot, i.e., the spleen meridian. The best place to feel it

with your hands is above the Fishnet point (Yufu), better known as Supporting Mountain (Chengshan; BL57).

Another good place is on top of the muscle and below Five Mile, at a point known as Chess Grate (Jimen; SP11). This is big enough to be felt through clothes, but you must push deep to feel it. This stomach pulse is best taken above the tarsus of the foot, at a point known as Thrusting Yang (Chongyang; ST42).

Thus, in the lower region, the pulse that matches heaven connects to the liver and also links to the terminal yin meridian of the foot. The pulse that matches earth connects to the kidneys and also links to the lesser yin meridian of the foot. The pulse that matches humanity connects to the stomach and also links to the greater yin meridian of the foot.

How about the pulses in the middle region? They, too, match heaven, earth, and humanity. The pulse that matches heaven connects to the lungs. The greater yin meridian of the hand runs here. The pulse that matches earth connects to the chest. The yin brightness meridian of the hand runs here. The Classic says, "Intestines and stomach have the same pulse; thus you can feel it in the chest". The pulse that matches humanity connects to the heart. The lesser yin meridian of the hand runs here.

How about the pulses in the upper region? They, too, match heaven, earth, and humanity. The pulse that matches heaven connects to the *qi* at the corners of the head. The pulse that matches earth connects to the *qi* of mouth and teeth. The pulse that matches humanity connects to the *qi* of ears and eyes. You can feel it in front of the ears and on the outside of the eyes.

The three regions thus each match heaven, earth, and humanity. Three each establish the connection to heaven (dividing into three each to make up a total of nine organs); three establish the connection to earth; and three more establish the connection to humanity. Three times three makes nine. The nine parts in turn match nine fields, which in the body appear as nine repositories (matching the most complete number of the universe). There are five repositories of spirit and four of the body, making a total of nine. Spirit repositories are the spirit soul in the liver, the spirit in the heart, the intention in the spleen, the material soul in the lungs, and the will in the kidneys. All these are residences of spirit and *qi*. Thus we say there are five repositories of spirit. The body repositories are containers, wide on the outside and empty on the inside. They can contain things and are thus known as repositories. More specifically, they are the head with its corners, the ears and eyes, the mouth and teeth, plus the chest area.

In short, the three regions and their nine pulses are pressed to feel the meridians of the whole body and thereby observe the condition of blood and *qi*

as they circulate in the meridians. It is a method to diagnose illness, known as thorough examination. An ancient method of pulse diagnosis, it was the earliest method of full-body analysis. The meridians, then, divide according to the three regions of body: upper (head), middle (hand) and lower (foot). Each has three pulses that match heaven, earth, and humanity, that is, the meridians of the three areas: upper, middle, and lower. In total, there are nine pulses.

Each of the regions of head, torso, and lower body has its set of pulses, formally known the three regions and nine pulses (see the table below). Later generations simplified this system and started to take the pulse from the wrist only, a feature called "solely choosing the wrist pulse." But that, too, divides into three areas, called inch, bar, and cubit. Pressing down at different levels called floating, medium, and deep. In each region finger pressure is different: light, medium, and heavy. This makes three positions plus three pressures, yielding nine pulses altogether. Zhang Zhongjing in his *Shanghan lun* (On Cold Damage), too, mentions the pulses of the three regions, here called "human face" (the carotid artery beside the Adam's apple), "wrist pulse" (the wrist radial artery), and "yang instep line" (the anterior tibial artery at the back of the foot).

Regions	Heaven	Humanity	Earth
Head	Meridians on both sides of the forehead (greater yang), *qi* of the corners of the head	Meridians on both sides of the ears (ear gates), *qi* of eyes and ear	Meridians on both sides of the cheeks (granary, face, *qi* of mouth and teeth)
Hand	Hand greater yin lung meridian (wrist pulse), lungs pulse	Hand lesser yin meridian (Shenmen HE7), heart pulse	Hand yang brightness large intestine meridian (Hegu LUI4), chest *qi*
Foot	Foot terminal yin liver meridian (Wuli and women's great meridian), liver pulse	Foot greater yin spleen meridian (Jimen SP11), spleen pulse, stomach *qi* joins foot yin brightness in this meridian (at Chongyang, ST42)	Foot lesser yin kidney (Taixi KI3), kidney pulse

Pulse diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine serves to measure original energy. Feeling the pulse beat is basically noting whether the heart beat is strong, weak, deep, shallow, floating, or heavy. As the pulse passes through the heart, so it also goes through the organs, thus, physicians analyze the heart to determine the situation of each organ, whether it is empty or full of *qi*. They get diagnostic results based on the relationship between the heart and each of the organs, but in reality this method is not great. Experts can equally use the original energy to activate spirit so that it enters the organs and moves into each

individual part. From there, they can diagnose the activity everywhere, carefully listening whether the organs are active or at rest, moving or still.

When original energy enters an individual body, it is different from the individual's energy, opening to immediate diagnosis. There are yet other methods that allow conclusions to be drawn without even having direct contact with people. For one, you can compare the individual's information with your body, thereby making pulse diagnosis unnecessary. You can also perform inner observation as recorded in the meditation manual *Huangting jing* (Yellow Court Scripture).

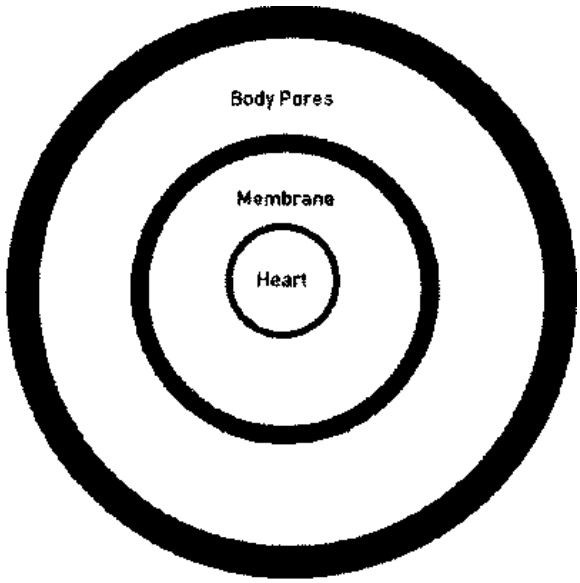
While sitting in meditation, use your ears to listen carefully to your heart. At first you may not hear anything, but soon you feel the heart beating and can count the number of beats. Look for the best place and way to do so—not everyone is alike and hears in the same manner. In the same way, your intestines also have their rhythm or pattern. Eventually you synchronize the three centers. Although we speak of the heart as the most prominent center, all three really have to function together, synchronized within themselves, inside the body and outside with nature. By becoming aware of the rhythmic beating of the heart, you can listen to the activities of all the organs. But start with the heart; it takes time to learn.

It is best to listen around midnight, even better right at the end of the *hai* and the beginning of the *zi* hours (11 p.m.). As already the *Lingbao bifa* notes,

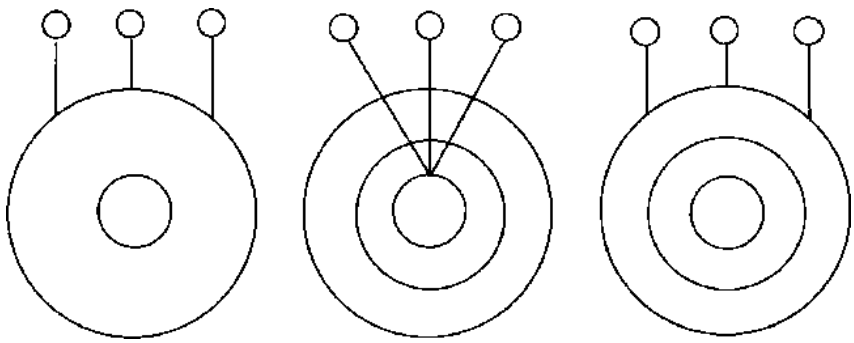
> At the *zi* hour (11 p.m. - 1 a.m.), *qi* arises in the kidneys. At the *mao* hour (5-7 a.m.), it reaches the liver, then gets to the heart around noon, at the w*u* hour (11 a.m. - 1 p.m.).

The nature of the heart being yang, it urgently needs to absorb something with of a yang nature, but late at night the *qi* production phase is at the bottom, in the kidneys. Kidney *qi* tries to move up, but fails to do so, causing the heart's need to grow stronger and making it work harder. So, practice sitting meditation during the *hai* hour (9-11 p.m.) and make sure your heart-and-mind and breath are steady. Then, once the *zi* hour arrives, you can start to hear your heartbeat.

As you listen to the heartbeat, you can also feel other activities in the body. At this time, once again listen to the motion of the pericardium. As the heart starts to break open, you can feel something that wraps around the heart, noticing how it moves and how often it beats. You notice how the beats of the pericardium and the heart are in multiples to each other. At this point, the pores join in to match the heartbeat and they all cooperate completely.



Count the frequency of the heartbeat while inhaling, for example, eight times; then again, when you exhale, the heart should also beat eight times. Keep on counting and make sure they are both synchronized. Once there is synchronization, you can feel the pores open and close simultaneously, totally matching the rhythm of the heart. This cultivation method is required according to the *Lingbao bifa*. The above illustration has no words. Having words changes the pattern, their addition making this the heart of ordinary people, a heart that does not know good and evil. Keeping it free from addition and words makes it a heart of nonbeing or no-mind. While there still is the heart-and-mind, there is desire; once there is desire, there is evil.



Master Lü said that the unity of three primes is hard to achieve. In the illustration above, the picture on the left in its upper part shows three pure entities appearing, indicating the no-self heart, no-self appearance and no more personal heart-and-mind. The lower part has two circles, showing empty hearts. None are left, neither the heart with the universe, the heart of nature, nor the heart of the physical body. The above image shows how this feature can be expanded, depicting the three pure entities as three empty spaces that constant-

ly change. Each changing space of connection shows a different energy, so Daoists say that every space has one person in charge and that is Laozi.

Turn your vision inward and look down at the lower field; turn your hearing inward to listen to the sounds within your body. Synchronize the three centers by first focusing on the physical heart. Based on the three centers, the physical heart supports the unity of the three primes. This is shown in the middle picture, where the three pure entities create a unity deep within. The picture on the right, finally shows the unity of the three primes in full realization.

Chapter Three B

Cultivation System

Forms of Breathing

Breathing can be natural, through the nostrils, through the body pores, internal, steady, and embryonic.

Natural breathing comes in two forms, conscious and unconscious. Unconscious natural breathing occurs freely; without any control, it naturally steadies the breath. Moving on from there, if someone wants to adjust their breathing to be subtle and long, we speak of conscious natural breathing. Exhaling and steadying the breath are different. Any feelings of suffocation while practicing the natural way of exchanging *qi* are due to issues with this. Just inhaling and exhaling is not enough for this, but conscious exhalation of breath will provide good results.

If you are vigorously striving to inhale and exhale, it is because your abilities are limited. After several cycles, you may feel the desire to exhale after inhaling to the maximum but cannot release the breath. Alternatively, you may feel that you want to inhale after a long exhalation but cannot catch the breath. In this case, go back to the first step of the natural way of exchanging *qi* and adjust your breathing. After this, regulate the exhalation and then steady the breath. Holding the breath does not stop *qi,* nor is it a complete stopping of breath, but only giving it a short rest.

Daoists have many technical terms for breathing practice. They believe that people have three spaces: upper, middle and lower. Adjusting inhalation and exhalation through nostril breathing serves to regulate the upper space. *Qi* can to pass into the body via breath in three ways:

1) The first route is straight: breath enters into the throat and is exhaled. After cultivating up to a certain level, it is important to seal the throat. To reach this level, you can neither inhale nor exhale: this is called sealing the throat, a form of breathing needed under certain circumstances.

2) The second route goes up before coming down. Inhaled *qi* travels to the Crown Gate, moving inside the skull. For this, turn your vision inward by calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, then observe and inspect yourself on the inside. As you move your attention inward, use the following breathing method:

gently take in a small breath, envision the Crown Gate, inhale and look up, then pull the intention down and focus it on the nose.

3) The third route goes down before coming up, so that inhaled *qi* reaches the organs. The first step here is to make the inhaled and exhaled *qi* enter the throat. The entire upper space is the place where spirit is stored, the entry hall of spirit, also called the residence of spirit. To adjust this space, adjust the breathing of the pores in the head. These pores squeeze in during inhalation and release out during exhalation, causing them to contract and expand in accordance with the breath. They breathe to reduce cranial pressure and if you practice right, cranial and abdominal pressure will be in balance. This method is called regulating the upper and lower half-moon spheres.[1] Part of the practices of attracting immortality, it causes the pressure in the upper and lower spaces to remain balanced. Without this balance, the three fields cannot operate.

Once the residence of spirit is properly adjusted, you can "contain the light of your eyes, condense the tones of your ears, seal the *qi* of your tongue, and listen with your heart breathing." All these belong to the upper space. After it has been set up firmly, let your intention move down slowly, reaching the lower space by passing through the middle space. At this time, the lower space also inhales and exhales softly. Tighten the lower abdomen slightly during inhalation, since the lower torso contains two spaces: the thoracic and abdominal cavities, representing heaven and earth in this sphere.

Tighten the lower abdomen slightly, then slowly increase force and eventually you can reach the lower space with your *qi*. There may be no change in the middle area, but this does not matter. It is because people's thoracic pressure is negative and thus the middle space is originally empty. In fact, the lungs are originally empty and if not they were not empty, people would be sick or dead.

Internal breathing is next. Inhale and guide the *qi* down below the navel; exhale, and let it rise but not beyond the heart. Adjust it until you feel your pores are breathing and the body is moving synchronously. When the pores become larger, stop and hold the breath, then see whether there is breathing within the body. If the pores are still inhaling and exhaling, i.e., opening and closing, we say that the body is empty. After feeling the body becoming empty, immediately hold the breath. If there is still breathing within, this is called internal breathing. It is the first step and also the critical one. When adjusting the breath through the nose, the upper part of the head is empty, and we speak of an empty head. The second step, then, is when the pores are breathing. Although you hold the breath, they are still opening and closing. At this point we speak of an empty body. Only when the body is empty can we turn our vision inward.

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[1] This translates *xián* 弦, a term that refers to the upper and lower cavities in the torso and comes from practices in the *Xiuzhen tu* related to lunar phases.

Daoists believe that the skin is the largest organ of the body: it can release turbid *qi* and breathe in fresh air. It is also the body's largest barrier to the outside world and its largest metabolic organ, able to release many substances. Overall, the skin is a key regulatory organ, controlling, for example, the body temperature. The practice of pore breathing, then, serves to activate and waken the pores.

The main reason the skin cannot move is that breathing not sufficiently soft, even, and long. Pore breathing means to adjust inhalation and exhalation through the nose, making them softer, more even, and longer. At the same time, if you focus on yourself, your body, and the universe, the pores too will slowly come into focus. But don't make them focus with a lot of force. Allow it to happen naturally, always keeping the three centers unified. Let the universe focus in the body while also allowing the body to become its own universe. Focusing it in the body means storing spirit and *qi* in the physical organism. Breathing through mouth and nose soft, even, and long allows essence and *qi* to gather there, too, and be stored in the organs. At first, focus conscious spirit, then gather primordial spirit, and finally contain the life force. You can only accomplish this by making the three centers into one.

The purpose of pore breathing is to transform the three kinds of *qi*. It is necessary to make sure they can be transformed. If they are not transformed, then the body's energy is not balanced and physical energy will gradually decrease, first causing sickness and death, then disappearing completely.

Also, base *qi* (cosmic energy) is the primordial *qi* of heaven. As you inhale, the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions presses on the pores of the body and enters it. *Qi* is the source of cosmic energy and when it starts to enter the body, it fuses with primordial energy to become stem *qi*. Do this many times, allowing clear stem *qi* to enter the body while turbid *qi* to leaks out. During guided instruction, when the teacher does not breathe correctly, he or she cannot match the practice of the students. This can make the students feel uncomfortable, confused, dizzy, and even unwell. During cultivation, if clear *qi* does not enter the body and turbid *qi* does not leak out, you will feel confused, unfocused, and sleepy.

Each of us is able to inhale *qi* into the body, but that does not mean that we manage to exhale it all. It is important to understand that we can release all kinds of body energy through the mouth and nose. Modern medicine believes that the alveoli at the bottom of the lung only get active when we breathe deeply, otherwise they just stay they are unmoving and remain unconscious. The second thing is, we rarely use deep breathing, but we still have to activate the alveoli, however difficult it may be. You may be able to match the length of inhalation and exhalation, but you cannot keep this up for a long time. It is possible to inhale some more after an inhalation, but it is close to impossible to exhale after an exhalation. We would feel like we are dying. For this reason, you

need to practice slowly, release the breath from the lungs completely as it reaches nose and mouth. This signifies a high level of attainment.

Steadying respiration. The word used for "respiration" is *xī*, which has two meanings: first, *qi* taken in and expelled during inhalation and exhalation; and second, "to stop" or "rest." The word sometimes means "to stop," but it also refers to respiration. When reading the classics, pay attention to the context, looking closely at the sentences before and after to determine which meaning the term has at the time. Sometimes steadying respiration means holding the breath and paying attention to the response the body has to this holding. There are also expressions that refer to settling, stopping, observing respiration, and the like.

In terms of the exchanging *qi* with nature, breathing practice must bring about a steadying of respiration. Inhalation of 60 to 70 percent is good enough. From there, steady your respiration by holding the breath in for a while, i.e., stop before you exhale. It is natural to pause for a moment anyway after inhaling and before exhaling, as well as after exhaling and before inhaling again. It is best to make inhalations and exhalations completely smooth and continuous, never having to stop and intentionally steady them.

Breathing continuously, there is no pause between inhalation and exhalation. If you can't quite do this, think of ways to observe and examine the process, reflect on the time you take between inhalation and exhalation, see how long it stops and how soon you inhale again after you exhale. This will help you achieve the purpose of steadying respiration, to make it subtler and longer. While you examine the time of stopping, make sure it does not grow too long, lest you start stopping it.

Next, hold the breath for a moment after you inhale, then exhale very subtly; hold it for a moment after you exhale, then inhale again. This way we intentionally practice stopping respiration for a little while. From here we can reduce the gap between no inhalation and no exhalation. When it finally disappears, respiration becomes continuous and seamless.

During guided instruction, if there is a gap at inhalation and one at exhalation, they must be balanced, lest chaos arises. Unless no gaps are left, through the process of steadying respiration, people cannot advance. At this time, steadying respiration is the main thing. Before you even start steadying respiration, adjust your breathing. Let it become regular and subtle, then practice. The key concern at this time is the moment of pause, when there is neither inhalation nor exhalation. Inhaling and exhaling are not difficult, since they come naturally to all. We can inhale and exhale even without practice; thus, the gap, the moment of pause is critical.

In the past this method was called the crucial moment in the firing process. It is a skill you have to learn, called a "secret" in the classics. To quote from the *Daode jing*, it uses the bellows as a metaphor: after pushing the bellows

out, you have to pause for a moment, otherwise you cannot pull it back. That is, you must stop the bellows before pulling it. As you are pulling back, you may think the air goes out the top, but the top does not move, so you must drop the bellows first before you can push it again. Once your pull is smooth, you can increase your speed slightly. Breathing practice works the same way. Adjusting inhalation and exhalation into a harmonious rhythm is the main point of steadying respiration. Its central key focus is exhalation; there is no problem with inhalation. The key is exhalation, because it is very difficult to exhale all the *qi* after inhalation, always a bit of breath remaining.

As you adjust your breathing when sitting in meditation, you can see whether steadying respiration is good or bad as reflected in the body, it is mirrored here. This "body" contains and is yet above the body as physical form, which in turn contains and is yet above the *qi*. Once *qi* is balanced, it manifests in your complexion. Thus, the second technique of attracting immortality is called "steadying the body."

Embryo respiration does not mean that you have a mother and have been, at some point, a breathing embryo. For a womb to exist, there must be a mother plus a separate entity and this entity's breathing is called embryo respiration. During pregnancy, the mother provides the host body while the embryo inside her womb is the separate entity; its life function is called embryo respiration. Without a womb, fertilized or not, this does not happen. Once fertilized, the womb can contain a male or female embryo or both. If the latter, they reside in the Cavern Chamber of the fertile womb, put there by husband and wife. Without the intercourse of husband and wife, the embryo does not form and there is no embryo respiration.

Husband and wife are yin and yang. When yin and yang intermingle, they become husband and wife. The couple enter the [bridal] Cavern Chamber and a child is conceived. The womb after conception is fertilized and forms the precondition for embryo respiration. Yin and yang flow between heaven and earth; in the body the heart matches heaven while the kidneys correspond to earth. So, where are husband and wife? Where is the Cavern Chamber? Where do they come together? Where is the embryo formed? What needs to be done after its formation? When is embryo respiration happening? What makes it good? Even if the womb is fertilized, the child does not necessarily survive. If the embryo dies or there is a miscarriage, embryo respiration does not happen. The practice is part of the larger process of making a person, quite like concocting an external elixir or making the pill of immortality.

Activating the middle field requires pore breathing. The lower field works through the lower abdomen, and the upper field is driven by the operation in the pores of the head and skull. Buddhists and Daoists agree to a large extent on this point. Daoists see a distinction between head and pores, skull and space;

Buddhists focus first on hair and skin, then deal with bone. Overall, there are three levels of field activation.

According to the *Wupian lingwen*, Master Chongyang said: "You inhale *qi* and exhale spirit. When spirit arrives, *qi* gathers." One way of reading this is that upon inhalation, you guide the *qi* to below the navel; upon exhalation, you let it rise but not beyond the heart. Inhaling to below the navel is perfectly doable; as you tighten the lower abdomen during inhalation, the *qi* reaches the area. To "exhale spirit," just imagine one area, think of a certain place, breathe out and call upon spirit. Once spirit arrives, *qi* follows. Just think of a place during exhalation to practice this to make sure that "when spirit arrives, *qi* gathers." In other words, spirit comes first, *qi* second.

During inhalation, to make sure the *qi* moves below the navel, tighten the lower abdomen with some force. During exhalation, to make sure it does not rise above the heart, imagine it moving up with vigor, but it may not actually do so. If it does indeed rise, this is like reducing lead and augmenting mercury during elixir concoction, but here it is just *qi*. So, imagine a place above where it should go and once it gets there, release it. Exhaled *qi* is spirit, which disperses upon exhalation and coagulates upon inhalation.

Inhalation means coagulation; exhalation means dispersion. During inhalation, you certainly can think of an area or place plus a specific path for the breath to get there, but this is difficult to do during exhalation. If a female forcefully makes the *qi* rise during exhalation, she soon will feel chest tightness. "Spirit exhales, *qi* focuses" means that spirit expands during exhalation, while "focus" means gather or revert. The nose is similar: you inhale through it, but it is hard to think of it during exhalation. This is because there is no *qi* left in the nostrils at this time; it has dispersed outside. This method is also very good for absorbing cosmic energy.

The *Dadan zhizhi* (Pointers to the Great Elixir; DZ 244) says, "*Qi* is the medicine that adds to the years and the heart can turn it into spirit. Know the original ancestor of spirit and *qi* and you become an immortal."

"*Qi*" here refers to the cultivation of the great Dao of prenatal being. This prenatal *qi* is the great Dao of prenatal being. "Heart" is not the physical organ of the heart or "heart" in the sense of the main center, but refers to the three centers that are located in head, chest and abdomen. Inhalation moves *qi* while exhalation activates spirit in these three centers. This is key to becoming immortal. Get the three centers fully synchronized and *qi* and spirit merged into one. This leads to immortality.

"Ancestor" means the ancestral home plus its particular *qi*. This indicates the upper, middle, and lower fields. The word for "immortals," moreover, consists of the characters for "mountain" and "people." They are beings who "follow the word for mountain but are not actually mountains; follow the word for people but are not ordinary people."

People are partly immortal and partly ghost: this is what makes them mortals. To one half, they are the result of previous generations; their other half forms the cause of later generations. Doctors believe that people form a bridge between past and future. We inherit essence, bones, and flesh from our parents, then we pass them on to the next generation. Both the result of past lives and the cause of future lives rest within our body. The dominant tendency is for people to die and become ghosts, but they better reverse direction and start cultivating and refining themselves toward immorality. The purpose of our practice is to hold on all good results from the past and get away from all potential causes toward the future. Doing so, we can pass these things on to the next generation. And some of us have already seen the next generation in the bodies of our children.

To eliminate old karma, we need to identify the channel that everyone has which connects him or her to past lives and the passage that leads to future lives. The *Xiuzhen tu* shows this channel. Most people move along the passage shown in its lower section, passing through birth, aging, sickness, and death. We all hope to receive great karma, obtain the best of our ancestors' karma (their spirit and *qi*), but will not pass it on. Becoming an immortal means cutting the karmic thread: no more passing on.

Since our ancestors and forebears have huge piles of karmic fruits, but we have only small mouths, we cannot eat them all, no matter what. We want to become immortals and attain Dao, we want to cultivate refinement and become buddhas, but the karmic fruits in both Buddhism and Daoism are too many while our mouths are so very small, so we cannot eat them all. Daoists and Buddhists have a saying: "Fruit, fruit, fruit, and more fruit." This means that most people cannot eat a ton of karmic fruits, they stick to only the ones that hang lowest and who knows whether they are bitter or potent. This is how we come to be what we are now.

Sitting Meditation

Daoists believe that there are three stages of human life: before birth, during life and after death. People today think, we are very clear about life, we already have done exhaustive research on how we came to the world. However, people really only know that their parents give birth to a baby and have no clue who they were before taking birth nor who they will be after death. Also, they often ask the question of why they were born and for this reason turn to religion, such as Daoism and Buddhism.

Religion is essentially the teaching of how to be a moral person and how to become better throughout life. It does not usually teach how to become immortal and attain Dao. These are issues impossible to solve theoretically, ultimately leading to practices of "cultivation." That is to say, we need to solve

these problems on the fundamental level, which can only be done through cultivation, using specific practices and methods of refinement. In ancient times, the meaning of religious practice was found around the world, but just by understanding this we cannot change our life-destiny.

When people inquire where they came from, they are in fact looking into the question of where they go after death. Such questions can only be answered while living in the lower of the three realms. Here, we are not concerned with the relationship among people, but with that between humanity and the universe. The earth level among the three realms refers to connecting with humanity, mountains, and rivers. Since people came originally from nature, as we pursue the place of rebirth, we must just seek help from heaven and earth. Here heaven signifies the father while earth is the mother. We, therefore, are the children of Planet Earth. Daoists discovered that the life-destiny of humanity can be changed by eliminating the life-force root of sexual desire or by refining it through cultivation practice.

The purpose of cultivation is the close study of life and death. In order to know our life, we have to practice sitting meditation. In old times, Daoists believed that sitting meditation had two components, imitating the prenatal state and returning to it. The first step, then, is to imitate the prenatal state, while the second step is to return to it. Since we cannot return to our prenatal state since we have taken birth, we must start by imitating it. Returning to it is a wonderful idea, while imitating it means that we imagine being back in the womb. This practice comes in twelve parts.

We usually perform sitting meditation in the belly of Mother Earth, one way of imitating the prenatal state. To return to the prenatal state does not mean to go back into mother's belly, but rather to find another father and mother for new rebirth. Planet Earth is our mother. More cosmologically, heaven signifies the father while earth is the mother. Each has its cultivation methods. The purpose of returning to the prenatal state is to search for a good place of rebirth; vice versa, cultivation at the place of rebirth facilitates the return to the prenatal state. At this time Mother Earth must give permission for us to enter it, which will prevent outside people from seeing us. This is when we say that we are in the womb. The method of returning to the prenatal state cannot be performed above the earth.

In order to get into the belly of Mother Earth, we have to find a mountain cave, that is, a place of rebirth. The location of rebirth is its mother. Once a new mother is found, we must also find a father, otherwise rebirth cannot take place. This means, you need to find a place where yin and yang *qi* combine. Nowadays we know that the Shuanglong dong (Double Dragon Cave) on Mount Jinhua (Zhejiang) is a good place, since it contains both heaven and earth. But then, where exactly is "heaven" in the cave? Does it have three levels? And does its earth have three layers, too?

Why did Patriarch Lü go to the Shuanglong dong three times? Why is it one of the thirty-six Daoist grotto heavens? Daoists believe there are two purposes of practicing here. One is to imitate the prenatal state, the other is to return to it. Mount Jinhua is where Huang Chuping (Wang Taisin) and his brother Huang Chuqi undertook their cultivation. To this day, there is a holy place on the mountain where he shouted at a piece of rock and it turned into a sheep. He literally shouted "sheep," and the rock transformed. Wang Taisin was a pioneer of cave cultivation, so his place was strange and special.

On the earth, the line that runs at about 30 degrees of the northern latitude (a little above 29 degrees) is highly mysterious. Most of the world's religions come from this region. Ancient Daoists believed that the earth contains thirty-six underground orifices useful to the body plus ten major grotto heavens that match the body's ten orifices of brightness. Zhejiang province alone has ten grotto heavens, right at 30 degrees latitude. They are close to the Shuanglong dong. Similarly in the region south of the Yangtse, there are many caves; fewer are found in other places such as Liaoning, Guangdong, and more. It is really very strange.

The Taohua yuan (Peach Blossom Spring, a scenic area in Hunan), is number 35 among the Daoist grotto heavens. In the old days it was called "the heaven of the white horse with mysterious light." It is very beautiful. Over the course of history, many high-ranking Daoists have practiced here, most notably Lü Dongbin, Bai Yuchan, Huang Dongyuan, and Qu Baiting. Patriarch Lü also wrote a number of scenery poems about the place, such as the *Taochuan xianyin* (Immortal Recluse of the Peach River). The poem goes,

> Becoming a spirit immortal does not happen by chance;
> The name of a spirit immortal name is not transmitted in vain.
> The boulder gateway to the stone cavern is still there today—
> Water flowing and blossoms dropping over how many years?

Another poem, entitled *Qinren dong* (Qin Man's Cave), has,

> The cave's entrance is deep and sealed with cloud;
> The red cliff in nine sections has how many layers?
> Having asked about the mountains for six decades,
> The man of Qin has exhausted his days searching.

Mount Changde (Constant Virtue) is number 53 among the seventy-two auspicious sites of traditional Daoism. In ancient times, the hermit Shan Juan lived here. Increasingly famous as later generations praised him for his virtue, he appeared in the Shande guan (Temple of Good Virtue) from the Tang dynasty onward. Changde city, moreover, is the location of the seven stars of the

Golden Dipper. That is, the city is surrounded by seven small peaks that look like the constellation, however, it did not have a perfect dragon. Thus, rather than a grotto heaven, it was considered an auspicious site, also known as the Five Hills. Texts in the Daoist canon describe it as a good place for cultivation, but not for becoming an official. It is maybe a Golden Dipper, but not having a valley for rice cultivation makes it useless for that purpose.

When you look at the map of China, the country looks like a chicken. It is quite obvious. The chicken is a rooster, with the islands of Hainan and Taiwan serving as its feet. Mount Jinhua in Zhejiang is a place with great fengshui, just about at 30 degrees northern latitude. It is easy to find. Both the Shuanglong dong and the Chaozhen dong (Honoring Perfection Cave) are located on Mount Jinxing, an open space than shrinks inward. The mountain contains a cave, which in itself has an empty space within. The top part of the Shuanglong dong matches heaven; its lower part is earth. Thus, the cave is a great place to practice; the *qi* of the five phases can enter it easily and it contains a separate heaven and earth: the land of rebirth.

The cave also contains a green dragon on the left side and a white tiger on the right. The ancients called it Mingtai (Bright Terrace), where the five phases could expand and coagulate. Here it becomes obvious that there are three levels of heaven and three of earth. The key cultivation in the cave is returning to the prenatal state, a practice you cannot perform in a park. When practicing in the Shuanglong dong, first listen to its heartbeat and breathing. The Chaozhen dong is a hollow that contains yang within yin, similarly a place of rebirth. It also offers a place to cleanse, matching a woman's womb. It has five orifices, one that allows you to hear the vibration sound of the earth's ley lines. When we enter either of the two caves, we are as it were moving into the belly of the rooster that is China.

Sitting meditation is done in several positions: loose, natural, half lotus and full lotus. Pick one according to your preference.

It has two components, imitating the prenatal state and returning to it. For the latter, you must sit in the full lotus position; you cannot do it in half lotus or natural style. Similarly, when you enter the cave to cultivate returning to the prenatal state, there is only one method. However, we ordinarily focus more on imitating it. Always during meditation, it is important to synchronize the three centers of heaven, earth, and humanity.

Sitting meditation is fundamental, it is the prime method is to build the foundation of all cultivation. Many classics discuss how many days it takes to build the foundation in various ways, which is also correct. However, the first step is to do proper sitting. Matching yin and yang is also fundamental as is using the earth's ley lines. To build a strong foundation in meditation three things are essential. First, the two hip bones and sacrum must be flat on the

ground; second, the spine must be straight; third, the three centers must be synchronized.

Three situations may arise with regard to the foundation. First, you build a strong base and do so very well; second, you are careless in the construction; third, you do not build any base at all, but remain twisted, slanted, and off-kilter. Under the latter circumstances, the stairway to heaven cannot be climbed, your efforts are in vain and fail to be wondrous. Sitting meditation has three main purposes.

First, it engages the meridians in the legs. Second, it increases blood circulation (rate of flow), especially in the lower body, under the hip bones and throughout the legs. The legs may go numb and, especially when sitting in full lotus, and may even will turn purple, losing all feeling. This shows that the pressure is very high. The benefit of increasing pressure is strengthen the lower field, since the abdominal pressure is naturally weak. Even then, the lower field is weak during sitting meditation as long as the spine is not straight. The shoulders hurt mainly because they are not relaxed.

Third, it imitates the prenatal state, that is, to re-enact the circumstances before birth. We imitate the state (and attitude) of being in the mother's womb before being born. At that time, the lowest point of the body was the tailbone (sciatic nerve), whereas the highest was the head. Only in sitting meditation can you make the tailbone be at the lowest point again. Modern scientific research has found that the tailbone has a hidden secret of lengthening and shortening the life of human beings; the genes, too, originate here.

The *Neigong shu* speaks of facing the wall for nine years, completing the training in the tenth year (which is like being pregnant for nine months and giving birth in the tenth), then cleansing for two years. The purpose of returning to the prenatal state is to find the land of rebirth. The Shuanglong dong is like the belly of the rooster that is China, so that entering it is equivalent to entering its belly, with its inner part matching the womb of a hen. We can never enter again the womb of our mother for rebirth, but we only squeeze into the belly of Mother Earth. As we practice in the cave, a new consciousness arises from the unconscious and as we recognize that, our human consciousness is no longer subject to the control of the body.

Hand Seals and Gestures

Let us start by distinguishing hand seals (mudras) from hand gestures. Hand seals are not used in cultivation, but serve in exorcism and to ward off evil, such as when you find yourself under attack. They form part of the banishing techniques of internal alchemy. There are thirty-six hand seals in circulation, but they are typically practiced incorrectly, especially among Buddhists who tend to use them a lot. Daoists never call them hand seals but speak of banish-

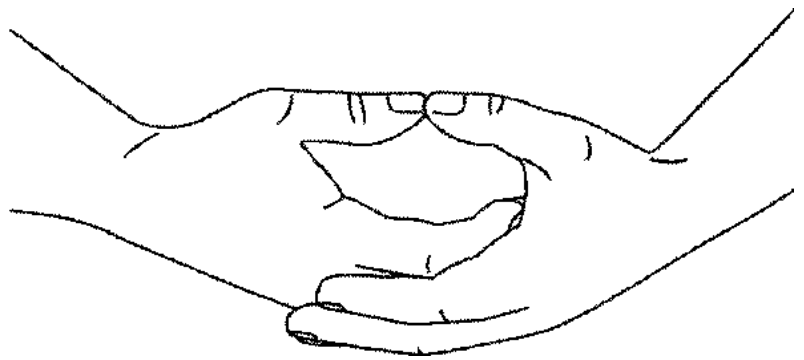
ing techniques, dividing them according to five powers of thunder plus those of heaven and earth. Buddhists classify them according to what they open: air, earth, heaven, water, and fire. They speak of the hand seals of the five spaces.

Hand gestures in cultivation serve to integrate the meridians, vessels, and bone pathways. You can practice for a long time without causing issues. Hand seals are not like this at all. An old saying has, "Internal practices and cultivation attainments require many hand techniques: they are ever-changing." This means that every time you change your hand technique, you open yourself to a different internal achievement, undergoing changes in body and heart-and-mind. The *Neigong shu* presents thirty-six major hand gestures. Let us look at some of them.

1. "Peace": With the fingers of both spread, place them on your knees. With both legs crossed, the meridians of the fingers are open, allowing the energy to flow freely through the upper body, each circulation perfect. Thus the body organism is firm and stable, properly manifesting yin and yang.

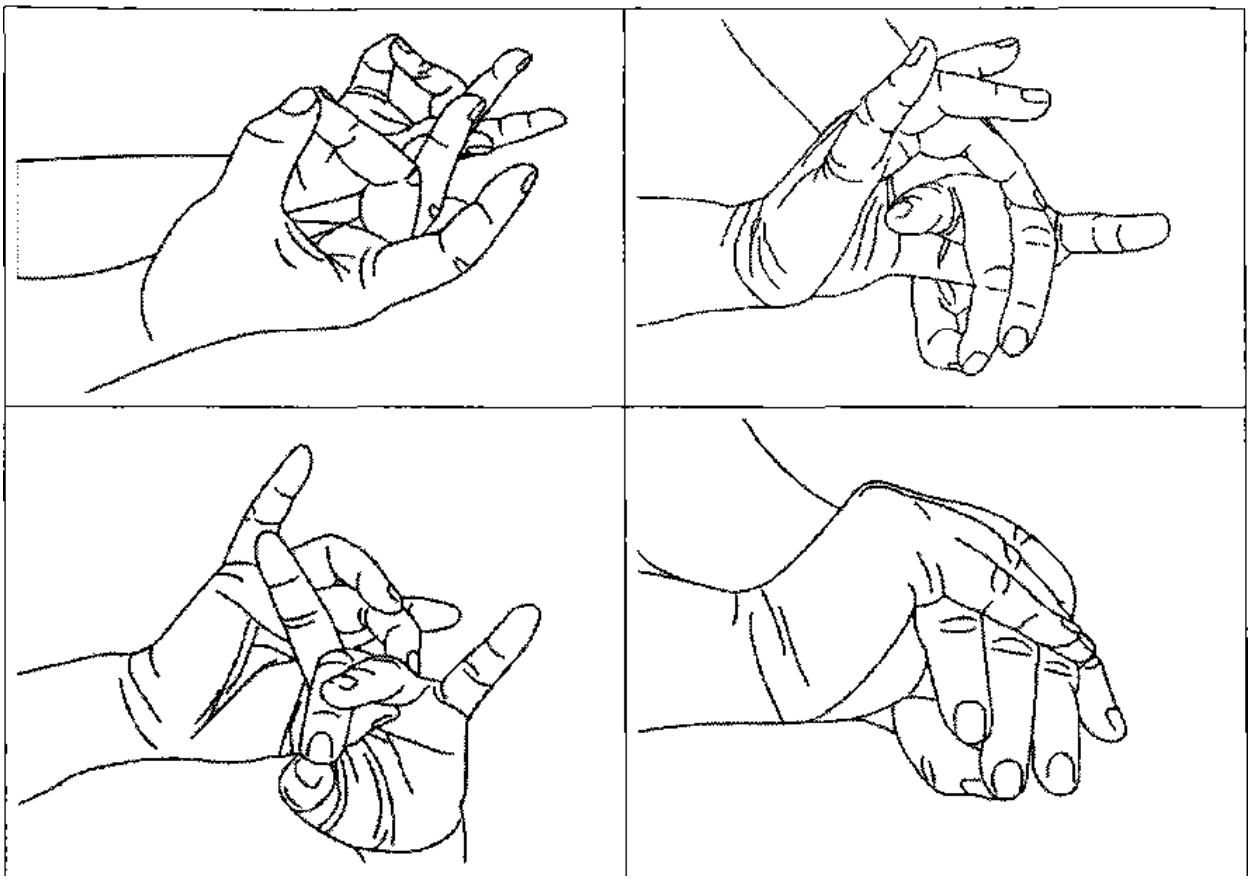


2. "Heaven, Earth, and Humanity": Stack the hands with palms facing up, one hand above the other. Join the thumbs to signify the division of heaven, earth, and humanity. The thumbs being joined signifies humanity. Now see which hand is the less strong and place it on top so that yang is within yin and yin is within yang. This gesture nurtures *qi,* but it has one shortcoming: it dislikes vibration. Once there is a vibration, the heart will be affected. So it is best to only use it when your home is extremely quiet.



3. "Eight Trigrams *Ziwu*": This is also known as the "*Ziwu* Ring of Trigrams" or "Secret *Ziwu* Trigrams." Hold the left hand on top, and the right

hand below. Let the thumb of the left hand bend to touch the tip of the middle finger, which matches the position *wu*. Now push the right thumb from the top into the ring made by the thumb and middle finger of the left hand and have it touch the root of the left ring finger, which matches the position *zi*. The right middle finger curves around the outside closing the right hand ring so that both hands are embraced.

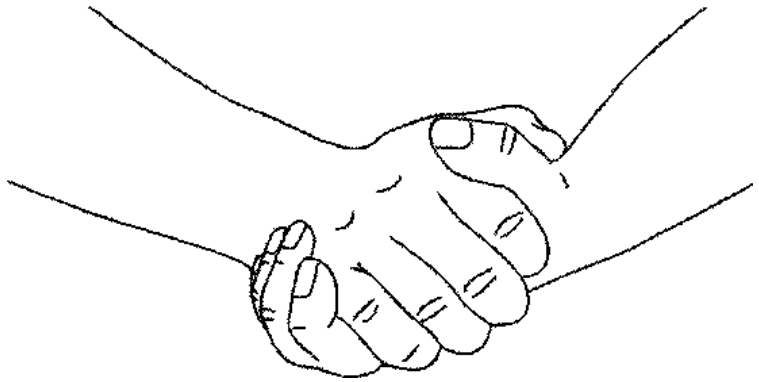


This hand gesture is also known as "Taiji" (Great Ultimate), since it divides into two spheres, yin and yang. After the hands are combined, the two tiger's mouths should touch. The right hand is outside, the left hand is inside: yin embraces yang. The tip of the left middle finger touching the thumb of the left hand engenders *wu*. The thumb of the right hand inserted next to the tiger's mouth of the left hand and pressing the ring finger engenders *zi*. The remaining four fingers of the right hand complete the circle from the outside.

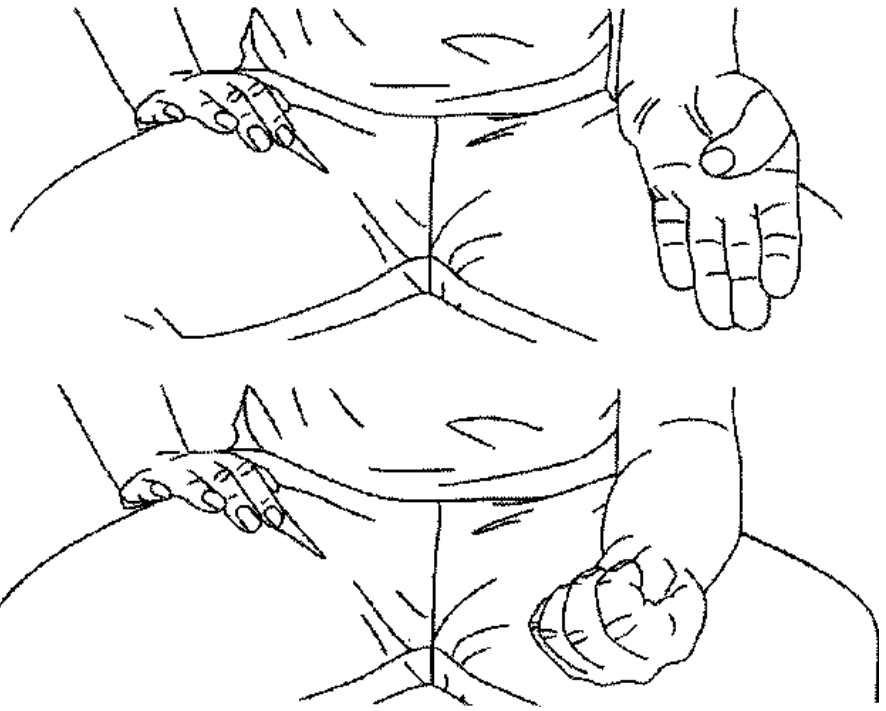
This hand gesture was developed to prevent fear of vibration, and anyone holding it will be very stable. Since the two meridians that run through the heart are already sealed, once the two hands has joined they control the heart meridian. Holding it all removes fear of vibration, so that the heart will remain steady even if the body shakes. It is highly suitable for the elderly, but young people can also use in their dorms. In ancient times, it represented the first of the twelve earthly branches and ten heavenly stems. Daoists believe that wards off evil and prevents being affected by turbid *qi*.

4. "Hands Joined": With both hand clasped together, palms strongly connected, the hand meridians are sealed and the hands carry out the circuit of energy. This hand gesture, too, dislikes vibration. The moment there is even a bit of vibration, you will immediately get up, reacting to changes in internal movement. In order to prevent this, its best hold the "Eight Trigrams *Ziwu*" or use it as an alternative.

In addition, hooking the thumb over the index finger changes this to "Guiding *qi*." Place this on your knees during practice. Also, you can hooking the little fingers together to form "Sealed Meridians." This seals especially the heart meridian. Most people use these. If the *qi* does not rise, press your index fingers on your knees. That should take care of it.



5. "Fists": Bend the thumbs into the palms and cover them with the other four fingers to make fists. Place them in the thigh gap on the side of the groin. During sleep practice, place them on the sides of the body or on the abdomen, ideally facing down.



Retreats and Fasting

The Daoist term for retreat, literally "closed gates" (*biguan*), goes back to the Jin dynasty (3rd c. CE). Such retreats come in large and small formats, small ones being held at a local temple while large ones take place deep in the mountains. Individual seclusion does not qualify, rather retreats involve group practice. Not talking, participants yet impact each other as they train together in joint effort. A retreat is a period when we have little or no contact with other people and the outside world, only relating to our brethren in Dao. From this perspective, retreats can be done in groups, single, or solitary.

They require certain conditions and circumstances. During a retreat, energy transforms. When it does not transform, it is not a proper retreat. In other words, if you cannot transform essence into *qi* and spirit, and revert it back from spirit into *qi* and essence, you have not undergone a retreat. Depending on the level, retreats are categorized as focusing mainly on essence, *qi,* or spirit.

Daoists believe that retreats have rules and regulations as well as particular methods or techniques. The purpose is to let participants attain these. Never mind whether Daoist or Buddhist, they all agree that only practitioners above average and sages of high wisdom are qualified to enter a retreat. This is because what they do can harm ordinary people, who are fit to repent and join rituals but not qualified to take a retreat. In a similar way, someone suffering from liver disease, when fasting, literally "abstaining from grain" (*bigu*), should not eat common food but can have something that will nourish the liver. Someone with a weak heart when fasting should practice single palm slicing, while a person with a weak liver and stomach should work on pushing along the paired meridians.

Daoists classify retreats according to self-imposed, led by a master, and requiring intense effort. During those led by a master, participants must follow three rules.

The first is called "sacred image." It means that the venue must have a picture or statue of the ancestral patriarch (in Hunan, they are mainly the Perfect Warrior and Zhang Sanfeng) and all participants must silently bow to it.

The second is "ultimate speech." This means not talking or engaging in other forms of communication.

The third is known as the "master's instructions." Any training guidance given by the master concerns mainly the Daoist classics and the techniques of internal alchemy. Question and answer sessions occur after each formal lecture. Thus, on the second day, each practitioner has to ask three questions, writing them on a piece of paper, which he then places in a box. The master randomly draws from these questions and answers them. If a practitioner raises a question that has already been answered in a previous session, some sort of disciplinary action will be administered, such as kneeling for a period of time.

According to Daoist rules, pure nourishment (Daoist vegetarian food) is to be taken in the refectory. Daoists believe it is best, before fasting completely, that one should not eat rice but take only fruit as a form of purification. This purification can lasts for ten, eight, or seven days. It, too, comes with specific rules, purposes, and methods. After this period of purification, if you want to abstain from all food, you begin to fast completely. Chan Buddhists believe that the perfect way of fasting lets you rise through the various heavens: eighteen heavens of the World of Desire, six heavens of the World of Form, and four of the World of Formlessness—28 heavens altogether. Daoists, too, subscribe to this system and speak of transcending the 28 heavens of the Three Worlds.

Essentially, fasting divides into three types.

Fasting through spirit. Daoists believe, if you cut out all food and just live by absorbing *qi* but are not successful in retrieving spirit, you are not really doing a retreat. One of the most accomplished practitioners of a retreat for spirit retrieval was Master Zhang Sanfeng. Its key objective is to make spirit to revert to the body at will. The *Daode jing* speaks of the "spirit valley [grain]," noting that it "does not die" (ch. 6), Spirit divides into conscious and primordial types—loosely translated as postnatal and primordial or prenatal spirit. More precisely, we want to still or seal off conscious spirit so that primordial spirit is brought out. When the *Lingbao bifa* speaks of "yang spirit emerging," it means that conscious spirit is completely sealed off. Only when this is sealed off can yang spirit emerge. In order to completely seal off conscious spirit and the yang spirit emerge, you need to interchange and transform the three energies at will.

Fasting through *qi.* If you cut out all food but cannot absorb *qi,* you are not really doing a retreat. Also mentioned in the *Daode jing*, this was best cultivated by Master Zhang Ziyang who worked dominantly on life-destiny and refined his *qi* while on retreat. He is the ancestral teacher of all forms of fasting through *qi* and was the first to use life-destiny to enhance inner nature and refine *qi* to cease eating ordinary food. Focusing spirit and *qi* from open space, he succeeded in the great enterprise of ascending to immortality. *Qi* divides into three types not often mentioned in the classics. Patriarch Lü spoke of life-force *qi*. The various types occur interchangeably in the classics, but in function they all refer to *qi* and its transformative nature. Thus, we speak of fasting through *qi*. Sealing off *qi* is a way of fasting through cosmic energy; its purpose is to allow cosmic energy to enter the body. Sealing off stem *qi* is another way of receiving cosmic energy: once the stem *qi* in the body is dead, there is no more need for cosmic or internal *qi*. At this time, you can really do something. Make sure during practice to work systematically with the three forms of *qi,* never omitting a single one.

Fasting through essence. The *Daode jing* mentions this, too. Master Lü said that not consuming essential food is not fasting. Essence comes in two forms, external and internal. External essence refers to food stuffs that are in-

troduced into the body from the outside, such as grain, vegetables, and the like. These foods can be categorized according to the five phases or flavors; they nourish the corresponding organs. We thus understand that we can use them to nourish *qi* (vitality, spirit, stamina). Internal essence, too, comes in five types, but you need to know which to run through which meridian, which to seal off, and which to open.

The three ways of fasting are inseparable. As you stop eating and rely on spirit to be in charge. Spirit regulates the function of the five organs and the activities of the meridians, making sure the five organs produce stem *qi*. With a lot of stem *qi,* we can handle hunger pangs; once *qi* is really plentiful, there won't be any problems. Therefore, it is important to prepare for fasting by never letting it go but constantly keeping it in the body. On the second day, you can let the stem *qi* go, release it to mingle with cosmic energy before you haul it back into the body. In the beginning you use conscious spirit to run this, since primordial spirit is not yet at our beck and call. But once conscious spirit is activated, primordial spirit follows.

The character for "grain" (*gu* 谷) in the term "abstaining from grain" literally means "valley". It occurs first in the *Daode jing*, which speaks of the "spirit of the valley" (ch. 6), but here this is not the valley as opposed to a mountain; rather it refers to being without sound. The "valley" of the *Daode jing* refers to a form of landscape, a feature where "mountains and valleys are full of *qi",* so any sound can travel far. There is nothing in the world that does not move, even states of extreme quietude and stillness, still generate sound. Even the deepest places, at times of deepest tranquility, still have sound of some sort. Master Lü said that even falling leaves emit sounds and an accomplished practitioner can perceive them. The symbolism of the character for "grain", then, means that the practitioner is deeply without sound, in a state of extreme stillness which enables him to do all sorts of things. This is the reason we need to abstain. The *Daode jing* reads,

> The spirit of the valley [grain] does not die:
> It is the mysterious female.
> The gate of the mysterious female
> Is the root of heaven and earth.
> Existing continuously,
> It functions without effort. (ch. 6)

Daoists believe that our present bodies are a mirage, a mere transitory vehicle. Whether you choose to be buried or cremated after you die makes little difference, because the physical matter of our body will gradually disappear with the passage of time. Our physical existence is really very short, no more than a hundred years or fewer than 30,000 days.

However, based on human evolution, the structure and metabolism of the body is such that we should all have no problem living to 150, provided that our existence remains in complete harmony with nature. Only when we do not live in accordance with the rhythm of nature will our physical life be greatly shortened, which is why Master Lü describes the body as a mirage.

Yet even this mirage of a body still contains a small amount of life-force *qi*. This is like spirit of the valley found in deep mountain gorges, the mysterious female that moves deep in our center. We cannot hear or see her, so we don't know where she is—just as we know that we have organs and a skeletal system, but remain without any real awareness of them. This total lack of self-awareness, then, is the reason why we take our bodies for granted and abuse them on a daily basis. It is a great tragedy that we do not hear the deep spirit, know what she is doing or when she begins her rhythmic movements (whether regulated). Still, she stirs, opens and moves—she truly is the mysterious female. When she stirs, her movements can be regular or irregular, providing the key to the practice of fasting.

The three forms of fasting make use of three forms of energy. Their interchange and transformation work through the life force as the main medium to conduct the various processes. The *Daode jing* speaks of it when it says, "Spirit attains oneness gains life force" (ch. 39). One version of this has "unity" rather than "oneness," but either way the state obtained is one of life-destiny force.

We all possess life force, even the dead. In fact, dead people rank highest, since they are no longer separate but have attained oneness, their life force complete before it leaves the body. Only when all the life force has left the body is one really dead. Master Lü says, "Stop taking food, coagulate essence and *qi,* revert spirit to the self, and let the life force enter the stem *qi*: this is fasting." In other words, fasting is a way of not taking in external essence that on the highest level works through spirit. This goes radically against the rules of ordinary society, since ordinary people for their daily sustenance predominantly rely on physical foods, which can be further categorized into different types.

The three types of retreats, matching the different ways of fasting, can be further subdivided based on their purpose, e. g., life and death. Master Wang Chongyang was the most proficient practitioner of the latter type, He believed that, unless he could make the life force complete and have it leave the body, how could he be a dead person? Thus, he called himself the living dead. He constructed a tomb for himself and lived there like the dead. Even the dead have feelings and thoughts and can communicate and dream. Master Zhang Sanfeng practiced the *Lingbao bifa* for many years, yet never got a good technique. Later, Master Lü passed his knowledge to him as he was working on fasting through spirit in the Taizi dong.

Fasting means returning from the postnatal to the prenatal state. The *Huangdi neijing* states, "Yin and yang are the two aspects of *qi*. Without special

activity, they divide from two into the five essences, which in turn give rise to the life force of the myriad beings."

It also says that the number 7 matches women and the number 8 matches men. So we have this equation: yin-yang and the five phases = 7 x 8 x 5 = 280 dāys. For women 7 x 3 = 21 days; for men 8 x 3 = 24 days. The basic number for male and female combined is 7 x 8 = 56 days. When combined further to form the embryo, we have 56 x 5 = 280 days. This is how long the embryo stays in the mother's womb. The monthly cycle for women is 28 days, multiplied by 10 months, this also makes 28 x 10 = 280 days.

Before embarking on a fast, it is important to realize its purpose, so that you can gain meaningful changes from it. Otherwise, it is nothing more than starvation. One major purpose is to acquire certain magical skills, such as X-ray vision, and the ability to diagnosis through either direct sensation or remote impressions. Another is to cultivate yin spirit. If you practice for a long time, it is easy to have magical visions but you need to train yin spirit to control yang spirit, so that you can tell truth from falsehood.

Once you reach a certain level of mastery, e.g. when the fourteen meridians begin to open in free circulation or while doing the big heavenly circuit, you become aware of certain spots or areas where energy is blocked. This is the point when you should practice fasting. Looking at the meridian conduits, considers why they do not run in straight lines but move in collateral channels. Also ask why their path ends. This is the functionality of fasting, quite different from natural food avoidance in response to certain diseases, which is not covered here.

Conditions and Stages

Fasting requires certain pre-conditions. One is the skill to obtain nourishment from the cosmos and the external environment, albeit not for long. Another is the skill to gain nourishment from flowers, trees, living beings and animals. Take, for example, the Japanese Daoist called Tailing (Great Life Force) lived in China for a time. When he practiced fasting in a pine forest, he discovered that there is a kind of contrasting interaction between human beings and the earth, which can be enhanced by gradually absorbing the stuff pine trees emit. The situation is yet different when working with shrubs or grasses, a method particularly suitable if you have a blood-related illness. Then it is best to take in the stuff grasses emit. A third condition for successful fasting is the skill to obtain nourishment from other people, e. g., when another person projects energy to you and you make up for each other's deficiency. This is a useful skill, indeed. There are three major stages in fasting.

1. Cease the intake of all grains. This means no longer eating the five grains and other cereals and legumes, instead living on fruits and water. Today some Daoist temples do not serve grains on the 1st and 15th day of every lunar month (new and full moon) practicing the recitation of scriptures instead.

2. Cease the intake of all food. This means to drink a glass of warm water both morning and evening, never taking even fruit while continuing to practice. For water, you can use morning dew, well water, lake water, or the sap of pine or cedar trees. It is best to drink the water boiled and not take it fresh.

3. Hold strong. This means sitting in meditation without any intake of food or drink, but absorbing energy from the natural environment, with its flowers, plants and trees. When you sit in an enclosed space indoors, you should have misting water (containing some medicine) all around, so that the pores of your body can absorb the moisture. You should also have a guardian to protect you. This level of practice is very hard and not easy to do. Holding strong is a major skill. You must sit motionless in full lotus, supported by someone around you misting water. You must not eat, drink, or sleep, but sit up the entire time. You sit like this until a vision appears or a new capability manifests. Then you need to make sure that what appears is real and not illusory. The practice ends when you cannot sit anymore and have to lie down. At that point, someone needs to spray some water on you. You should also drink some water with honey and take a good rest.

In order to cease all food intake, you must know how to absorb *qi* into your body. The method is as follows. First work on the exchanging *qi* with nature, then do energy balancing. Once you have completed these, there is no need to stand like a pole but you can go and sit in a meadow or in the woods. For example, when you practice on the liver, stand facing a pine tree, absorb its *qi* into your body, direct it into the liver, then let it run toward your eyes.

If we did not have the natural organ of the heart, but had an artificial one instead, our ears would still be easy to use, since "once the heart-and-mind dies, we can finally hear spirit talk." Listening with the heart requires sensing with the whole body. The ears are no longer directed outward. Listening inward is a precondition of proper fasting, its first benchmark. Of course, this requirement is different for everyone. We use our entire body to tune inward and sense whether the organs are active, whether they can modify *qi,* whether—once modified—they can shift essence and transport stem *qi* to different places, whether any sounds are generated in the process and whether a divine internal medicine is generated within.

All the grand masters—Patriarch Qiu, Master Chongyang, and Patriarch Lü—only taught exceptional disciples, who already knew the existence, location, function, and characteristics of their organs. They understood how energies are exchanged internally and externally through the organs and how to extract and tap into cosmic energy. Therefore, there was no need for them to practice inner vision. We, however, are ordinary people, so we have to find a way to learn how to look within.

Size does not matter when we focus spirit and body. Spirit comes in two forms, conscious and primordial. When we fast, we work mainly with primor-

dial spirit as the overlord, recognizing conscious spirit as his minister. This is not easy. We use conscious spirit to decide to cease eating, activating it for this purpose, but primordial spirit (the overlord) may not necessarily agree with this decision. The lord says it does not feel good to go to bed at night on an empty stomach, so we have to employ our conscious spirit again to control primordial spirit's sleeping and waking, since primordial spirit won't let us sleep when hungry. In the morning, moreover, conscious spirit tells primordial spirit to move our bowels, but there is nothing in the large intestine, so primordial spirit again becomes terribly unhappy.

So, what exactly does it mean to focus spirit? Our primordial spirit is under the control of the life force. When the life force shines forth, we can practice fasting. As long as it does not shine forth, you cannot do so. You must first stabilize primordial spirit. But, then, what is primordial spirit? When we focus the body fully, either vastly expansive or in minute detail, we reach a point, as Laozi calls it, where "you look at it and cannot see it" (ch. 14). Then the body is focused to the point where "spirit is stable and *qi* coagulates." At this moment, primordial spirit appears. Once it appears conscious spirit can surround it and ask it to cease eating grains. And primordial spirit will make an accurate response whether to eat.

Only when we focus the body to the point where "the body is stable and *qi* coagulates" can we listen inward and turn our attention to look inside ourselves. At this point, we finally can decide whether to practice fasting. Conscious spirit may misbehave; for example, it may want to eat, yet fail to make the necessary preparations. Fasting requires special timing. For example, when you are hungry is a good time. We call this the right moment. Practicing when the moment is not right, again as Laozi says, it is like dropping into the bottom of the valley. It will be very difficult to climb back up again.

Focusing the heart means that we engage in a dialogue with ourselves. At this time, the heart may tell you not to practice right now, and once you start it will accelerate its beat beyond the ordinary range, going faster and faster and screaming for you to stop practicing. But then conscious spirit steps in to say that the entire seven-day process is not complete yet and we cannot stop now. However, if you have heart disease or feel tightness or pain in the chest or back, then you have to stop the practice and start eating again.

Focusing intention means to treat ourselves properly and well. To starve is to abuse oneself and disrespect the gift of life. We are alive and heaven has endowed us with life force. Treating ourselves well also implies that we treat others well and not burden them with our health issues.

Supplementary Sitting

After completing the fast, there is an additional sitting meditation around midnight. Practicing for the first time, if you have no problems for three to five days, you can again start taking fruit, walnuts, or peanuts, and drink a little water. On the very last night, after 8 p.m., you can eat, but start with something full of fluids and rather soft. In ancient times, this was called the starting time. After eating, immediately practice sitting meditation, because the stem *qi* transforms around midnight after 11 p.m., when the *zi* hour starts. The hand gesture that goes with this is Eight Trigrams *Ziwu*, which seals off the heart meridian. After taking food, move it in that direction and it will accept it.

Because of hunger pangs, spirit (the mysterious female) will move up and down, but if you keep not eating, it will stop. Around 11 p.m., food transforms into stem *qi*. When this happens, you must keep totally still and do your best to sit for an extended period, ideally for the whole night. This will allow you to have a vision. Through the process of fasting, more and more stuff is released from the body. On the third day, it is common for the legs to start trembling and shaking (you may be able to walk, but feel a tremble when standing still). Add to this the effort to remain silent, we need to find a way (applying what we have learned) to motivate the body's stem *qi* to circulate to the lower field. Once it reaches the lower field, it begins to move gently and starts to vibrate. From here, energy runs along two possible lines.

One line runs upward, rising high from the lower field; the other goes down. You may want it to go up, but may not have enough power; you may want it to go down, but it does not respond. For this, we have an ingenious method. Once the *qi is* accumulated in the lower field, there are only two possible paths it can take and we carefully watch for them. Never mind whether it goes up or down, just remain motionless and observe with detachment. See where it goes as its path is never wrong. This applies to all.

If you notice the energy rises, because you have just eaten something, it is possible that something else will move down. So, watch carefully whether the downward energy from the effects of the food is greater than the one rising. This will determine its ultimate direction, i.e., whether it moves up or down, whether it spirals and spins. Older practitioners best let it spin for a while before allowing it to rise. Younger adepts should simply observe the entire process without interference, patiently waiting to see if the energy begins to spin.

If the energy does not spin, don't worry but wait patiently. The section between the middle and lower fields, the area between the heaven and earth in the abdomen is now empty. Once empty, it forms a complete internal universe. Energy moves there, but not necessarily around midnight. Whenever it moves, we speak of the right moment, the time of movement.

After completing the fast, practice sitting meditation at night, working with perfected respiration to make yang *qi* within yin rise up and yin *qi* within

yang sink down, so they can meet in the Central Palace and generate movement there. Once you have taken food after fasting, patiently wait for the two to appear. First, silently circulate the five phases, allowing the organs to start moving, then circulate the *qi* again to the lower field.

See whether the organs are active as ideally they should be. In order to reach this, silently circulate the five phases, so that the stem *qi* of the five organs returns through the *qi* orifices and transforms into primordial essence. Refine essence into stem *qi,* so that yin *qi* within yang can rise. Then perfect yang *qi* of the Ancestral Orifice enters it, where it reaches the zenith of yang and generates yin fluid. At this point yang *qi* transforms into perfect essence and descends. Use pore breathing to get the external *qi* of the five phases to enter the body universe. The three all merge into one, which is what the alchemical classics call "the three and five unite." This is the level of the three and five uniting.

At the end of the *hai* and the beginning of the *zi* hour (11 p.m.), you must sit in meditation. Sit up on your bed and let yourself soar. Focus dominantly on breathing, which people in internal alchemy call advancing the wind. In this breathing method, match the respiration to your body ("sealing the furnace and cauldron"), then match your body to your heart ("activating internal medicine"). These three practices of internal alchemy are the most difficult; they are not available in medical treatment. About midnight, sit in meditation on your bed, match respiration to the heart, focus with vigor, and listen to the sounds of your body universe (internal) and the cosmos (external). This evening practice is also called sitting meditation to focus the mind. While sitting, external *qi* will rise (don't let it sink down) and the entire person becomes empty and without roots. Being without roots allows the *qi* to float upward. As it ascends, light may appear in front of your eyes. Once that happens, do not open your eyes, but slowly watch the moving light and see if there is a bright spot.

Fasting is a practice to understand and get to know yourself. It can last three, five, or seven days. The whole process is beneficial whichever number of days you choose; it is good even if you are not well. After three days, you may discover some health issues; after five days, you may identify the weakest link in your body. You may still pass excrement after three days, but no more after five days. While fasting, all the other practices are to be done daily. If you practice as long as three weeks, you may "see" many things and until you do so, you should not stop. The first benefit is to discover one's weakest spot(s); the second is that weaker or diseased cells will be destroyed in the process, to be replaced by something new. In this fashion, the overall quality of health improves. It takes 7 x 7 or 49 days for the body's blood to be renewed completely. Practicing 9 x 9 or 81 days is even better.

On day one of the practice, the goal is to become aware of the activities of the five organs, to recognize the sounds associated with them and to have a

clear idea of what effects appear when the organ activity moves from one to the next (giving rise to flavors). Medical drugs actually match the effect; they are not mere flavors.

Can you thereby achieve perfect harmony of the five phases and make the *qi* of the five organs move toward the prime? (That is, the Yellow Emperor issues a summons and the five organs come at once). In practice, when you settle in sitting meditation, make sure all five organs become active and rise up at the same time. If you let them sink, they should all do so simultaneously.

The second goal is to find out what happens to your organs if you do not receive nourishment and energy from the usual external sources. How do they respond? Without eating, original energy gradually diminishes, so you need to tap into cosmic energy to sustain yourself. However, when cosmic energy arrives in the body, how does it get to the five organs?

The third goal is to really get to know your organs. Where are they hard, where soft? And if hard or soft, how do you deal with that? The *Daode jing* uses water as a metaphor, so do your organs resemble water? You can order them about: tell them to be full and they are full, to be flat and they are flat, to go and they go, to stop and they stop. This is how far you should get on the first day.

Effects and Attainments

When fasting while on retreat, the first day has five requirements for each practitioner: listening with the heart, focus spirit, body, vision, heart-and-mind, and intention. These match the five rules of grain abstention. The first is the most important, a few among the others we can control easily. The heart you listen to in this context is not the physical heart, but the mind within. Focusing intention means that you take good care of yourself, paying close attention to your life. If you cannot focus spirit immediately, take your time and practice slowly—if not today, it will work tomorrow or the day after. The same applies to focusing the body.

Now, what are the practices on day two? You tap into and draw cosmic energy into your body and transform it into original energy in various ways. One is through the exchanging *qi* with nature. When you practice fasting, you walk differently. While fasting and practicing the exchanging *qi* with nature, by all means hold your breath to allow more time for cosmic energy to remain in the body. If you do double holding breath, i.e., holding it in after inhaling and out after exhaling, you will not feel hungry.

Another way is by pacing the seven stars, traditionally known as the Steps of Yu. This is best done at night, so you can tap into external energy. Also perform the intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams to direct your life force into the ball. However, this will make you feel hungrier. In short, doing the exchanging *qi* with nature will keep you from getting hungry; pacing the seven stars will enhance your essence and spirit.

While fasting, you may experience three states of the life force: elusive, connected to spirit, and shining forth brightly. Shining forth brightly means that the life force is in front, while spirit is behind. This state is attained with the assistance of the sun and moon. People today think this is superstition, not realizing that they engage in a similar activity when sun bathing.

Connected to spirit means that the life force runs around like a crying child. The practice here involves methods of calling it back and focusing it.

Elusive life force is not inside the body, but outside, appearing and disappearing in front of our eyes. Early Daoist patriarchs describe a particular cultivation method for this. The Buddhist *Lengyan jing* (*Lankavatara Sutra*) and the Daoist *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* contain similar methods to address it but they follow a different sequence. According to the last part of the *Lengyan jing*, one should first stabilize the body, then allow empty life force to appear. The first chapter of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* insists that we first allow it to appear and let it stabilize. The Daoist method is to start with opening the Heavenly Eye, then let the elusive life force settle through it.

Elusive life force has its own movements and is not easily captured. The *Xiuzhen tu* depicts it as a monkey and a horse. When calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, there are times when it is there, times when it is not, and times when it goes and you cannot make it come back. It comes and goes beyond your conscious control. This is the phenomenon of elusive life force: shining forth brightly is one of its signs. When it appears, spirit is also present, so that when life force is in front, spirit is behind, and vice versa. Use spirit to capture life force and as you imagine doing so, make sure it shines forth brightly. Only when spirit is totally clear and bright will you know how to capture it, in which direction and toward what position to move and how exactly to place yourself.

Most people feel very hungry on the first day of grain abstention; on the second day, they are much better. Without being consciously aware of it, there is still some internal activity, which you cannot intentionally stop or control. This is also one way in which the elusive life force manifests.

After properly fasting for several days, there is some activity on the surface of the body but it is quite empty inside and quite possibly you are too weak to stand. You may want to control these surface activities but fail to do so—this is another sign of the elusive life force. Its activities are scattered and not concentrated in one spot or area. As long as it has not been coagulated to arise as one, it is scattered throughout the body and however you try to stand you cannot. At this time, spirit inside the body (spirit of original flesh) battles with the elusive life force. As a result, the moment you see food you want to eat it. In fact, if you wait just a bit, you work through this stage and the elusive life force appears again.

In the old days, adepts who wanted to practice according to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* had to do a lot of preparatory work, starting with a 21-day retreat,

getting to the point where the elusive life force would manifest, the spirit gathered, and spirit light appeared. Only then could they practice the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* material. The twenty-one days, moreover, divided into three stages. The first seven days were to maintain silence and stop all intake of food and liquids.

Practitioners then were not allowed to have direct eye contact with anyone, but must lower their head when walking about. This was because the thoughts and ideas in the human mind to a large part come out through the mouth, so a first priority was to discipline the mouth. This also included not eating anything, thus practicing fasting through spirit. The *Daode jing* says that grain contains spirit, therefore anything we eat has spirit and *qi*. When spirit of food is cut off, the elusive life force will manifest. We may feel weak and empty physically, but if we can still walk about, move around and perceive slight activities when awake, that is a good sign.

Fasting can also cause potential harm. Those not practicing properly may drop dead or suffer from gradual physical degeneration and continuous weight loss. As a general rule, during a ten-day fast, there should not be any weight loss. In certain cases, there may even be weight gain. Your complexion and appearance should improve noticeably and the longer you practice, the more energized and spiritized you should become. At the peak of this increase in energy and spirit, stop the practice and start to consume food: the regenerative powers of the body are at their peak. After this, even when eating ordinarily, when you do *qi* practices again, there should be significantly different results, especially with the Heavenly Eye exercise.

When you fast, you typically think of eating something, just like vegetarians sometimes crave meat. But because you also consider the higher purpose or the beneficial outcome of the practice, you persevere and do not eat. If you are a vegetarian, you will have even better results.

One of the main goals of going vegetarian is to improve your sensitivity. Meat eaters all have a certain odor and by default are less sensitive. People rely not only on their noses to smell and taste, but also use their body pores. Just like people who don't breathe will suffer from carbon dioxide poisoning, so the body pores are essential for sensory perception.

Vegetarians also have cleaner blood and less coagulation; their flesh is not as lumpy as that of meat eaters. They become gradually subtler and finer in their muscle fibers, while people who eat meat tend be larger and more gross. Becoming a vegetarian should be done bit by bit. Do not suddenly stop eating all meat. Meat eaters have more mucous and phlegm. To practice x-ray vision and the merging of the sun and moon, the precepts clearly demand that you must stop smoking, consuming alcohol, drinking tea and eating meat. There are various different types of vegetarianism and many theories.

The Three Forms of *Qi* and Their Movements

Master Lü's *Neigong fu* (Rhapsody on Internal Training) has the following lines:

> Cosmic *qi* (氣) is the natural respiration of the universe.
> Stem *qi* (炁) is the secret potency of the body universe.
> Fire *qi* (炁) is the secret power of cultivating perfection and reaching immortality.
> Profound, wondrous and eternal: the three forms of *qi.*

Cosmic *qi* is the *qi* of nature and heaven, of the source and origin of all. Formless, it does not follow regular patterns and has no fixed path of movement. Everyone (including corpses and cremains) inhales and exhales this *qi* of the universe, matching the respiration of nature. The classics typically begin by writing about the creation of the universe and the many transformations of *qi.* It existed even before human beings or the earth came into being; it is the largest energy of the universe. Without *qi,* there is no water; without its transformations, even if there was water we would not exist. Thus, *qi* is the source and origin of all, all beings and substances depend on it, including human beings and all matter, even the trends of our changing times.

Cosmic *qi* is highly spiritual and marvelous. The term occurs only once in the *Daode jing*, which describes it as subtle and wondrous in its transformations, combinations, and coordinations. The structure of *qi* contains oxygen (used by human beings and plants); thus, it matches nature. We all use it equally, calling it the primordial *qi* of heaven. As our pores breathe, they too use *qi,* bringing it into the body and eliminating it from there.

Stem *qi* is *qi* created from nonbeing and manifests in the body's energy flow. Moving around the internal levels of the body, it is invisible and intangible to ordinary people, however, it has form and consists of particles that can be measured by instruments. This is what people talk about as perfect *qi.* A skillful practitioner can see, feel, and touch it. As we inhale and exhale cosmic *qi,* what is left in the body is stem *qi,* the source of perfect *qi.*

Fire *qi,* simply put, is a gas that is discharged from the body. It has light and heat, just like the body's energy flow with its particles. People can see it when it is discharged; it can also be emitted intentionally to produce an electromagnetic wave, which in turn forms a magnetic field effective in healing. A skillful practitioner can send out high-quality fire *qi,* made up of fine particles. Its particles can penetrate walls, match the infrared spectrum of the earth or be black in color. All this is considered high-quality and most precious, but hard to train for. Black fire *qi* is used to treat serious ailments and can mend bones. Refined from stem *qi* and produced intentionally after a certain amount of

practice, it allows practitioners to see through walls, have good night vision, and control evil.

Human beings and animals emit fire *qi* from their body as do other organisms. It comes in two types: one has a regular pattern, the other does not. For example, in ordinary people it does not have a regular pattern, thus they consume a lot of calories while running and engaging in exchanges with the outside world. To keep ordinary people alive, a lot has to be consumed and compensated. Practitioners rarely consume fire *qi* but conserve and coagulate it. If they ever emit it, it forms a line or a point that can be used productively.

People today widely believe that discharged *qi* is harmful, but Daoists disagree. Modern scientist similarly think that car exhaust causes air pollution, resulting in the depletion of the ozone layer. Daoists disagree. They believe that these gases do not enlarge the ozone hole. The amount of car exhaust is nowhere near as much as that emitted from a big chimney. Daoist think that car exhaust should be recycled and purified, then released into the atmosphere.

After practicing to a certain level, cosmic *qi* transforms into stem *qi,* which in turn changes into fire *qi.* At this time, you have to take a good look at your practice, since it will be necessary to abstain from grains and meat, stop smoking and drinking alcohol, coffee and tea. Without doing so, you cannot enter the stage of fire *qi.* The most important practice here is stillness, although you can also do some movements. But you cannot control others from a distance, since movement practice depends largely on stem *qi.* As you graduate from stem *qi* to fire *qi,* you need to seal off the three yin orifices and close the nose with a clip.

These two kinds of *qi* have to be able to convert into each other as well as enter and leave freely. The faster you move when practicing the exchanging *qi* with nature, the greater your stamina gets and the faster the two forms of *qi* transform. To keep and retain stem *qi* in the body, use internal guiding of breath, not the nose and mouth. Let it flow freely, following the method described in the *Huangdi neijing* as "transporting essence and transforming it into stem *qi.*" To let stem *qi* flow all through the body, circulate it through the five phases and five organs. This is one way of transforming essence into *qi.*

It is a somewhat mechanical job. The *qi* in the five organs does not move of itself, so we have to find a way to get it going. Mechanical exercise follows a regular pattern but should not be rigid. Ideally we should let it move spontaneously, matching time and space. Stem *qi* can also discharge fire *qi,* retaining its good parts and expelling the bad. After discharging and while fasting, you urgently need cosmic *qi* to enter the body. Inhaling cosmic *qi* is easy; expelling fire *qi* is hard.

Actually, the three forms of *qi* symbolize the mutual conversion of the three energies in the body. Natural energy from the universe enters the body, moves through it, and is discharged. Stem *qi* is transmitted energy, the growth

energy in the body. When they meet, we speak of original energy. Once all three forms of *qi* rise and combine, original energy can be revived. How to refine all three is described in ancient documents like the *Hetu* (River Chart) and *Luoshu* (Writ of the Luo River). To properly understand these methods, first appreciate the nature and application of the three forms of *qi*.

People of old moved stem *qi* from the stomach and intestines up to expel it through the mouth or down to excrete it. They would first work on stomach *qi*, also known as soil or earth *qi*. Moving from the duodenum to the liver and gallbladder, it was known as wood *qi*. Thus, they gradually discovered the path of its movements. After a long and careful exploration of the meridians, they understood that the *qi* moving through the body was this type of stem *qi*.

Ordinary practitioners tend to focus mostly on perfect stem *qi*, also known as primordial *qi*. They take in cosmic *qi* through the mouth, absorb it into their body as breath and through the skin. Once there, it transforms into stem *qi*, which in turn changes into fire *qi* as it is discharged through the mouth. Discharging this *qi* from the mouth with a strong mental focus, you can cure various ailments. To do so, coagulate the stem *qi* of the matching organ, then blow it out as fire *qi*. In ancient times, medical practitioners were not permitted to smoke or drink before treating people, especially girls. If you put something (e.g., tea) in your mouth, fire *qi* mixes with the tea juice and when it enters someone's organs, it has anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects.

All these practices work to transform and refine the three *qi*, matching the interaction of essence, *qi*, and spirit to effect transformations in the material world. Thus, these three form one of the three big treasures.

The human body lives through the continuous transformation and interchange of the three *qi*—cosmic, stem and fire. In the old days, their practice was known as "expelling the old and absorbing the new." Today, we undertake some practices that have changed since the old days and a few that haven't. For example, opening the fourteen meridians with the five phases only uses stem *qi* that is never released to the outside. Similarly, opening the eight extraordinary vessels with the five phases works dominantly with sitting meditation and utilizes stem *qi*. The intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams, too, refines stem *qi*, but energy balancing practices work most strongly with releasing it. Always during practice, imagine how the three forms of *qi* change and transform. When engaging a different form of *qi*, use a different method. Only when inhaling lunar *qi* can you use either one.

To transform the three forms of *qi*, change them from not following any regular pattern to having a clear rhythm. Natural breathing does not follow any regularity, so you must gradually establish a rhythm while making the breath soft, even, and long. If there is a disruption, adjust by intentionally inhaling long and exhaling short, or vice versa. This is a good way to setting up a regular pattern of breathing.

Common parlance has it that cosmic *qi* is prenatal and stem *qi* is postnatal. However, the classical masterpieces of Masters Lü and Wang Chongyang state that stem *qi* is prenatal and cosmic *qi* is postnatal. Why would that be? Cosmic *qi* and stem *qi* are at the root of the universal division into prenatal and postnatal. Stem *qi* as prenatal is thus the main force of being before material existence, while cosmic *qi* is a power after life came into being. Why would they describe it like this?

Prenatal indicates the realm of emptiness and nonbeing. As long as we live, breathe, and take nourishment (postnatal nutrition), the body exists. Anytime we are doing things, therefore, we are in a postnatal state. After death, corpses do not change, speak, or act, and that, too, is part of being postnatal, of resting in a postnatal state. As long as we have not passed fully through the postnatal state, we cannot cultivate prenatal being. When the classics speak of this, they are really talking about the dialogue we engage in with ancestors, masters and forebears. They refer to the teachings the elders handed down when they say, "We must by all means cultivate the great way of prenatal being." They are not referring to a dialogue among ourselves.

The dialogue among us is physical; anything you can actually say is postnatal. Thus, our cultivation, too, is postnatal, a way of expressing our desire to move toward the prenatal. We want to refine prenatal being, but we cannot do so because we do not know what the realm of emptiness and nonbeing looks like, what prenatal being really is. The only things we can express in words are postnatal. Laozi used the word "Dao" to refer to this, but even he does not know what exactly it is. He, too, is a postnatal person using words to talk about prenatal phenomena, using postnatal images to express prenatal conditions.

To cultivate internal refinement, practitioners must change their movements from external to internal, then go from internal motion to using *qi*. *Qi* practice here divides into three types—movements of cosmic *qi,* stem *qi,* and the body.

Movements of cosmic *qi*: During sitting meditation, pay close attention to the various sensations near you, front and back, right and left, above and below. Doing so, notice the interchange and direction of cosmic *qi* and see whether it is moving. People of old called this external movement. Modern usage speaks about paying attention to the fluctuations in the field.

Movements of stem *qi* refer to movement deep inside the body, internal body motion. Movements of the body indicate external movements of the body, the physical body in action.

The body is the universe of the self, the universe of the person. The self is contained in the body. Taking this one step further, we can also say that movements of cosmic *qi* can cause other people to move. For example, when practicing sitting meditation in a group, everybody is required to remain still,

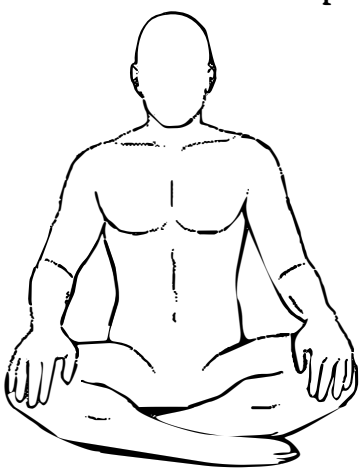
because when one person moves, his or her movement will influence all the people around him. This, in fact, is a movement of *qi*.

Movements of stem *qi* can be used to control other people. With its help you can control yourself and others. Movements of the body can be used to control other people, animals, and plants. The three also manifest in spontaneous movements, so that movements of cosmic *qi* spontaneously follow the five regular patterns; movements of stem *qi* spontaneously follow various regular patterns; and movements of the body spontaneously occur when controlling others.

Among basic methods, to achieve good movements of the body, practice energy balancing, opening the meridians through the five phases, the intention ball practice of the eight trigrams, as well as the mutual refinement of heaven and humanity. The purpose is to go beyond regular body movements to get to regular movements of cosmic *qi*. Then go even beyond this to control the regular patterns of stem *qi*. It moves even when the body remains still, so the practice creates an energy that can be used to control others.

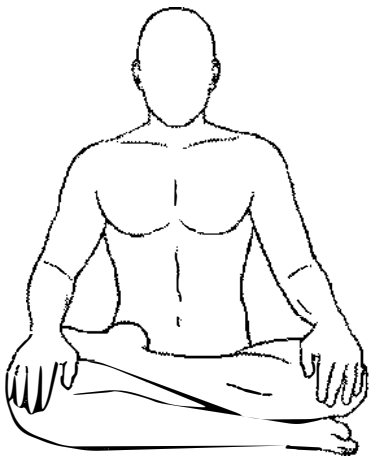
How to Meditate

There are four basic postures for sitting meditation.

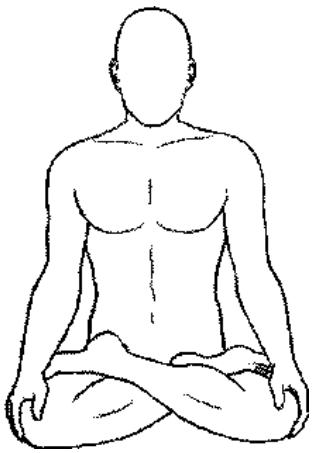


Loose sitting is the simplest. You just sit casually, with crossed legs. This is for those who cannot sit in the lotus posture. Beyond that, sitting comes in three forms: naturally cross legged, half lotus, and full lotus.

Natural sitting involves having the legs crossed, one leg pressing on the other. It does not matter which leg is inside and which outside, just follow your inclination. Make sure to press on and seal off the Bubbling Spring point (Yongquan; KI1) at the center of the soles. Here four points touch the ground: the two hip bones and the two feet. However, this style is not very stable.



Half lotus comes with two options. Either put your left foot on your right leg, keeping the right leg bent to touch the ground, and vice versa. Half lotus involves placing one foot on the thigh of the opposite leg, near the hip joint. The upper calf rests on the lower leg, pressing the Bubbling Spring point, while the upper foot presses against the hip joint of the lower leg. Here three points touch the ground: the two hip bones and one foot. This style is more stable.



Full lotus also has two options. Either put your right foot on your left leg, then your left foot on top of the right leg, or vice versa. This style uses the two feet to press against the hip joints of the opposite legs. The soles of both feet face up. Here two points touch the ground: the two hip bones. In addition, it is best if practitioners sit on a hard surface. Without full lotus sitting, you cannot complete the following methods: five hearts saluting the emperor, gathering the three flowers at the top of the head, and embryo respiration.

No matter whether you are Daoist or Buddhist, sitting in full lotus is the starting point for all middle vehicle practice. You cannot possibly reach the highest level without it. In any posture, when sitting in meditation, pull the feet inside as much as possible. The closer and tighter they are, the better. Try not to have any gaps.

For all kinds of meditation, you ultimately want to be able to work in full lotus. It is better to use this than any other posture. There is no greater position to achieve than full lotus, since it shrinks and tightens the body to the maximum, causing it to condense and compress. The purpose of compression is to make people denser and increasingly saturated. When the mass is big and the volume is small, energy is produced, with eruption at the maximum. Full lotus practice has yet another characteristic. The three yin orifices (anus, genitalia, and perineum) are open at the bottom of the pelvis, which also means that this style of sitting makes it easy for people to be troubled. The body internally heats up and cools down fast, often making it unbearable.

The alternative way of practice is loose sitting. It is very comfortable, but there is little density. In natural sitting, the three yin orifices are sealed off completely. The buttocks move together and seal them off, so that only the external genitalia are open. In full lotus, on the other hand, all three are open.

Looking at the classics, it becomes clear that ancient Daoist masters did not emphasize any specific postures or standards for sitting meditation. So, ultimately it is best to start the practice in your own way and be comfortable. Do not worry about your sitting position. Each individual is different. Some people's legs are flexible and they can push themselves into half or full lotus, but most cannot do it. Just get there slowly, working within your comfort zone. Be happy when you do sitting meditation, make sure to be relatively stable (maintaining a balance of left and right, upper and lower and front and back) and rest comfortably.

Once you have unblocked the body, little by little move your focus inward and carefully try sitting in half lotus. When this becomes comfortable, you can try full lotus. Also, if you feel that half lotus is not powerful enough, try working in full lotus. When working with natural sitting, do not try to get into full

lotus. If you force it, you may get injured. Also, trying to achieve the highest level will get you into trouble. Just learn to sit on top of the perineum and eventually the legs will begin to loosen. If the *qi* does not rise along the proper lines, it is because you only are only using half lotus. At all times, it is important to relax and let it naturally go out and come back.

The transition from natural sitting to half and full lotus is gradual. Children can sit in full lotus with ease because their meridians are unblocked; it does not hurt. Just be aware how you sit naturally, what makes you comfortable and realize whenever your body is not straight. That is good enough. However, in all forms of meditation, you want the spine to be absolutely straight. Without that, you cannot even do loose sitting.

For an embryo inside the mother's womb, the lowest points are the two hip bones and the highest point is the head. As you think of moving from a postnatal to a prenatal state, your first step is to imitate the prenatal state in your sitting posture, closely followed by the second step of returning to the prenatal state.

Sitting in meditation is hard. "Even iron men find it unbearable." It is tougher than any other suffering. The purpose of enduring this level of suffering is the realization that all human affairs in this world are essentially suffering and that all transcendence of the three realms of heaven, earth, and humanity must come through suffering. We need to experience suffering and endure pain so that we realize how much we can tolerate. In the end, we have to practice down to the bones and their marrow, where things can move around. People are actually capable to endure a lot of pain, it just depends on their will. Sitting in meditation means to pursue happiness from suffering, learning to enjoy the moment. Only meditation practitioners can taste the pain and joy it offers.

Repentance

Repentance is an extended form of sitting meditation. Practice it once or twice on the day before New Year's and before your parents' birth and death days. It does not matter in which style you sit, the more relaxed the better.

Set yourself up properly, then turn your attention inward for inner observation. Sit like this for a long time and some emotions—joy, anger, sadness, or happiness—may appear. When the heart and body cannot contain them, they need to be expressed. Thus, you may feel sadness, aggravation, good cheer, or happiness, but in all cases make sure to look for the depth of sorrow behind them. If you cannot find it, there is a way: imagine listening to your father and remember some scenes with your mother. If your heart is not clear, you cannot do this. Ideally you start having a dialogue with your parents, but if that does not work, look at an image of your master or recall from memory what he looks like.

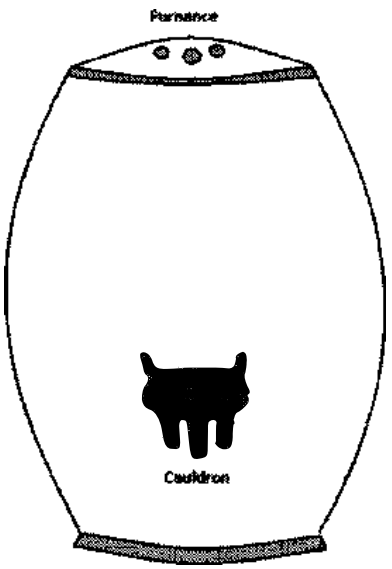
After sitting like this for four or five hours, your legs will be very painful. If you keep sitting at this point, there will be even more pain, even multiples of pain. The more you sit, the shorter the time of persistence. As soon as you open your eyes and want to sit again, you cannot do it. This is because you do not let yourself to do it. (Your inner self does not let you do it.)

There is another situation when you feel like talking without restriction and even talk about your most personal affairs. At this time, your legs hurt terribly, but you must endure. If you move, you will not be able to start from where you left off, thus missing a great opportunity. There is a lot of mystery here. You will experience the relationship between body and spirit and that between spirit and soul, to the point where spirit is no longer attached to your body. At this time, you won't even pay attention to your clothes, not even if you lost them. You have no time or sense to dwell on anything, it is almost as if you cannot see any particulars anymore, everything just looks so beautiful. Plus you are completely free from all feelings of hunger and thirst. You may feel like shouting or crying, which is fine. You can cry for sadness, jealousy, pain, suffering, and more. The ultimate cry is usually, "Mother!" and that may feel really strange. But once you got through this phase, you will never be sad or hungry again. You can recover a state of non-exertion.

In the past, this dimension of practice was known as "locking in the life force," a name Daoists still use. It is a training method to control the life force and the spirit soul in your body. Key rules for practicing repentance include, first, never to speak about the personal experiences of others from what you hear or see, and second, never to speak about the ugly affairs of others.

Elixir Concoction: External and Internal

Fundamentally Daoists used the terms and descriptions of external or operative alchemy to explain the workings of internal cultivation. The Daoist canon contains the symbol ⊥, which shows the construction of a foundation. In ancient times, internal alchemy imitated external alchemy, while external alchemy shed light on internal alchemy. In other words, adepts used external concoction methods to illustrate the internal process, so people could understand it better. The core concept of internal alchemy is that transformation takes place internally, but the way it is practiced now follows the methods of external elixir concoction. That is to say, as adepts apply external methods to the body, the body becomes a furnace, which contains



a cauldron. As we transform internally, this becomes obvious in our appearance and eventually the entire body becomes an elixir. The following shows the workings of both modes.

1. Install the Furnace and Set up the Cauldron

External: Create the foundation. Make sure the ground is flat and even, then erect an alchemical furnace with eight holes. Toward its top set up a hook so the cauldron can hang by a rope in its center, making sure it is equidistant from all four sides.

Internal: Take a hundred days to set up the foundation inside the body. First you make sure to sit properly on a secure, flat surface, then you seal the lower three yin orifices. The body should be in a vertical position as if hanging by a thread, properly aligned with the navel. Breathe in and out through the nose, making sure the breathing is soft, even, and long.

2. Adjust the Water Level

External: To adjust the water level, align the opening of the furnace, so that it is level and the bottom is flat.

Internal: The spine has to be upright and the body's center straight. The spine being upright means that the three long lines in the body (the broken, reflection, and conception lines) are aligned. They should all be on the same plane, matching the spine. Breathe in and out through the nose to straighten the spine.

3. Clean the Furnace

External: Make sure the furnace is completely clean.

Internal: This takes a lot of effort. Once the spine is upright, start to empty your mind. First clean the head, using pore breathing on the head until it is empty. As you do so, to make sure the head is straight, adjust the breathing through both ears. Find a line between the ears and align it with the central line. It is not easy to clean the head, as the pressure here is highest among three spaces in the body. If the pressure in the cranial cavity cannot be reduced, send it down to the lower field, then adjust the pressure in the abdomen. You have to find a way to increase abdominal pressure to reduce cranial pressure. This is called adjusting the upper and lower half-moon spheres.

4. Ready the Furnace

External: To start concocting the elixir, cover the furnace with a lid. Light a fire to warm the furnace and cauldron. There is nothing in the furnace at this moment.

Internal: Adjust both the lower and upper fields to establish upper and lower half-moon spheres in the body. Start to practice pore breathing, thereby to seal the furnace and cauldron.

5. Heat the Furnace

External: Increase the temperature in the furnace to a certain level. The degree of heating depends on whether you can see a certain yang quality in the *qi* of the furnace. After sealing it, identify its center and make sure the cauldron is right there. No matter how clean the furnace is, if there is even a tiny opening in the lid, the *qi* will rise and escape and something will appear at the bottom of the cauldron. If, after the furnace is warm, you can see something at the bottom of the cauldron, this is the *qi* of perfect yang.

Internal: Move the *qi* from the top down, letting it sink through the torso to its lowest part (at Meeting Yin near the perineum). Then very gradually bring it up into the lower field. If there is even a tiny amount of perfect yang, the body can get warm at this time. Actually, just look and see whether the body has the ability to nurture perfect yang in the lower field. Seal the body tightly and focus on its center, located at the lower field in the abdomen. Once the *qi* reaches the lower field, exhale slowly focusing on the lower abdomen, then slowly focus it in the lower field. Use a warming fire to nourish every little bit of perfect yang.

6. Gather the Ingredients

External: After furnace and cauldron have been set up well, start to add ingredients. There are at least seven things to be added, including lead, mercury, pink powder, green powder, and more. Lead and mercury are essential; after them, add at least five more things to complement them.

Internal: The body essentially contains five kinds of elixir ingredients (the *qi* of the five phases in the organs). The *qi* enters from the mouth and nose into the lower field where it converges with the *qi* from the bottom. These are the two *qi* of yin and yang combining with the five phases.

7. Refine the Ingredients

External: Start to add heat until the mercury no longer vaporizes and the lead no longer sinks down. It is hard to control the firing process and stabilize the incoming air—there is nothing you can do about that. The process has to be continued until a cinnabar frost collects on the wall (this frost can be white or red, possibly representing oxidized mercury, which has a sedative effect). Cinnabar particles will form at the bottom: this is the elixir.

Internal: Silently circulate the five phases to establish minor elixir circulation. When you start to practice, make sure that each internal organ is uniformly activated in the order of the generating cycle, your breathing is even, you

strongly apply your intention and carefully control the firing process. If done right, you will definitely feel something moving in the lower abdomen. At this point, quickly allow it to turn into *qi* and see whether it rises up or sinks down. If it rises up, practice calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice; if it sinks down, augment yang fire and reduce yin impact. You can also rotate it once in the lower field and from there let it enter into the organs to silently circulate through them in the generating cycle of the five phases.

8. Disperse the Fire

External: To open the lid, make sure to get the timing right, as it is very particular. When concocted correctly, the elixir will be hot and could collapse on you as you open the lid. First reduce the fire. You must not open the lid at random, as this will bring heavenly, primordial *qi* into the furnace. If that happens, the elixir powder will change instantly and show up in a different color.

Internal: The best way to disperse the fire is through pore breathing. There are several ways. One is, after silently circulating the five phases, use pore breathing to move it through the body. Another is to remove the fire in the cauldron by inhaling through the pores, guiding *qi* into the lower field, then exhale from the lower field again through the pores. This releases *qi*. A yet different way is by inhaling into the lower field, but instead of exhaling through the pores, let the breathing be internal and observe what happens.

9. Explanation

External: The height of the cauldron is such that the components can rise or sink down; it can be adjusted to concoct different elixirs. The furnace height also needs to be adjusted since it must connect with the *qi* that pervades heaven. After some time, the height of furnace can be increased in order to achieve yin within yang and yang within yin.

Internal: The cauldron here is the lower abdomen, with a tendency toward ascending. It is best if it rises all the way to the head: this forms the golden cauldron. Here we refine the *qi* that pervades of heaven and earth. Cultivating to a certain level, we will lift off the ground (using a particular training method), while our body takes on the shape and power of the Taiji (its upper part clear, the lower part turbid).

10. Inspection

External: The production of herbal remedies and the concoction of external elixirs have much in common. You add a little something to the ingredients and a potent remedy emerges, then you add some starch according to the correct proportions and form it into tablets. In external:, too, you can find out whether you have succeeded in making an elixir by opening the furnace and see if it is there. External elixirs are for others to ingest and Daoists will not usually

take them themselves. In the process of concoction, the elixir can easily become poisonous. Also, if touched, its color can change. There are many kinds of external elixirs.

Internal: Proof that the practice was successful, according to the elixir manuals, appears in several signs. One is that, when the elixir of the five phases is functioning in the body, the skin becomes delicate and soft. Another is that spirit comes and goes with ease, behaving just like a small child, having a grudge one moment and forgetting it the next. A third is the ability to sense external energy directly through the body. The *Qingjing jing* says, "Sensing the *qi* of the external universe through the *qi* of our body universe, we can comprehend other people." Also, *qi* now can make essence transform into stem *qi*. If ever you feel sick or have an ailment, *qi* will accumulate in that particular area. During this stage of cultivation, you will appear very comfortable.

11. Effects

External: Elixirs come in nine types. During first concoction, the best you can achieve is one that is orange in color and rather hard in consistency. You cannot consume it directly, but only together with something else. Taking it plain violates the rules. It is also useless, because it will be excreted immediately.

Internal: When the internal process is complete, the results are invisible and intangible. We can only know its effects within ourselves: they are unique to the individual. In the beginning, whether we are aware of any changes depends on how sensitive we are to our inner states. We can enjoy what we feel within, but others cannot. Internal practice is not for show, but converts into a form of internal energy. Daoists believe that when we reach the highest level, nobody can see our mastery. Once we transform into pure *qi,* there is nothing left. For Buddhists, on the other hand, the body continues to exist as a subject, but some also transform it into pure *qi.*

Refinement Procedures

In refining the elixir, you set up the furnace and cauldron on a platform and assemble your ingredients in the furnace. The body itself contains the necessary ingredients, the energy of the five organs matching the five phases. In addition, many other ingredients come from the outside as we inhale and exhale. Respiration is the ongoing interchange of primordial *qi* as well as the absorption of the two *qi* of yin and yang. This makes seven basic ingredients. In addition, the body from top to bottom contains vast stores of energies you can use to concoct and refine.

To practice internal alchemy, first install the furnace, set up the cauldron and collect external ingredients in the furnace. Once the three centers are syn-

chronized, heat the fire and start concocting. You concoct and refine your energies within yourself and your entire body becomes one big furnace. The body set up correctly is called the furnace. No matter what size the body is, it still encloses the cauldron.

The cauldron in the body is located in the lower abdomen, which is why we turn both eyes inward and observe the lower field. Our intention and thoughts are fully centered on the lower field. We inhale and focus the *qi* there; we exhale and release it from there. The purpose is to let the cauldron unfold throughout the body, opening it to certain techniques of refinement. For this, by all means make sure the three centers are synchronized.

Beyond this, the firing process must be appropriate. (The ancients transmitted the overall technique but not the particulars of the firing process). The first way of firing is through our breathing in close coordination with the body pores, which in turn connect to internal movements. You must not move too fast or too slow but work carefully with internal essence and stem *qi,* transform it and spread it throughout the body. Also, you must follow the rules that govern the movement of the internal ingredients. For example, there should be mutual motion patterns, each breath matching one move. The body cannot seal the furnace and cauldron by itself. Therefore, you need to rely on pore breathing to accomplish this. Using pore breathing you can seal the body. Use a few breaths to seal yourself and your body universe. Then the furnace is sealed.

The primary purpose of sealing the furnace is to obtain the key internal ingredient, which may be the hardest to transform, the most sensitive, or the easiest organ to dissolve. Generally, start by looking at the heart, since its energy transforms best, and to transform it consciously in the furnace is a good method of self-refinement. Therefore, silently circulating the energy of the five phases is also called establishing minor elixir circulation. After completing its refinement in the furnace, circulate this elixir to the lower field and nourish it. If you complete this process and open the lid but find nothing there, nothing has settled at the bottom of the furnace or collected on the walls, you cannot call it an elixir, because it has escaped. In ancient times, they called this keeping the bath warm, referring to the process of external alchemy.

When refining an external elixir, whatever collects at the bottom of the furnace is called the elixir; whatever accumulates on the walls is called the elixir powder. Both are potent remedies. They can appear as white, red, or black frost, each with its particular name.

When refining the external elixir, the lower part of the furnace needs to be sealed. It has eight holes, arranged according to the eight trigrams and placed in the eight directions (not like the eight different kinds of wind). It is important to let the heavenly *qi* flow in through the position of Sun and wind. (This statement appears in the *Yijing* and also in the *Zhouyi cantong qi* [(The Kinship of the Three, According to the Book of Changes]). If you use a different way to

direct the heavenly *qi,* the *qi* of Qian and Kun, i.e., heaven and earth, cannot connect.

The problem here is not the direction. If the fire is fueled from two directions, it gets too hot, which means it attracts the heavenly *qi* too fast. Always, concocting the elixir needs to be undertaken in close connection with the time of day, matching the hour to the position of the trigrams and their connections. There are many different methods for this. The size and dimension of each hole, moreover, should be designed in accordance with the size of the furnace and cauldron. Their main function is to let air in (not guiding it into any direction). For example, when air comes from the east, the south gate is opened; when heat needs to be added, we use the southeast gate. All other gates open to nurture the fire.

Listen to your heart: it is in the torso, whose inner space forms your personal heaven and earth. In this, the heart matches heaven and the kidneys correspond to earth. We refine the heart above because it is the easiest to transform. We call it mercury. Once it sinks down, we speak of lead. Mercury is good at flying, but it gets lost easily because of its nature. Thus, it is necessary to seal the body's pores. Since there are heaven and earth in the torso, there must also be a head. The first step is to synchronize the three centers, which causes the three regions to line up. In the same way, try to align the thoughts in your cerebral and abdominal brains.

Chapter Four

Exchanging *Qi* with Nature

Exchanging *qi* with nature appears in a special part of the *Neigong shu*. To practice it, your posture should be "natural and relaxed, having the potential to move," while your intentional thinking should be along the lines of: "I am the universe, the universe is constantly changing, everything is moving, and so life begins." Also, "Keep the body moving, focus and release the mind." With this method you expand your body universe—the biological electric field—at any time. You can also use your biological electromagnetic field to diagnose and treat diseases as well as guide your *qi*.

There is an essential difference between exchanging *qi* with nature and unconscious moving and instinctual walking. There are no rule for unconscious moving, walking, and breathing. The brain has no specific intention to focus on. Therefore, people who move unconsciously, cannot synchronize their breathing, walking, and thinking into oneness.

When exchanging *qi* with nature, breathe and walk consciously. While moving, follow strict guidelines, your mind concentrated, and your breathing and walking synchronizing into oneness. Move and breathe in close accordance with the guidelines, your intention on focusing and releasing the human bioelectric field. In this way, you can steady the breath, restore energy, enhance intelligence, reduce diseases, and increase longevity.

Exchanging *qi* with nature is a great technique for everyone: intellectuals, manual workers, the elderly, and anyone physically weak. It restores mental energy and body strength, and is especially good for women after menopause, since it helps them regain the balance of their energy, blood, and inner organs. The method has no limits with regard to time and place, but it is best practiced in places that have flowers, trees, and fresh air.

Exchanging *qi* with nature in the old days was called "absorbing *qi* from nature." It starts with walking while breathing, followed by holding the breath in, then holding the breath both in and out.

The First Technique

Part One

Walking for Three Steps

Posture: Stand still and relaxed, arms hanging down naturally, palms facing the legs, eyes looking straight ahead into the distance. Focus spirit light and close your eyes. Rest for a moment, then open your eyes, look straight forward or around, and let your hands swing back and forth naturally. Alternatively, put them behind your back. Walk naturally.

Method: Breathe in while walking three steps; breathe out while walking three steps. Take in a breath while walking three steps forward, then breathe out while walking another three steps forward. Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: While breathing in, think of *qi* coming from all four sides and eight directions and entering the body through the pores; while breathing out, think of *qi* moving out into all four directions, the farther and wider the better.

Note: To exchange *qi* with nature, when you practice walking for three steps at a time, if you have a liver ailment, gallbladder discomfort, or hepatobiliary disease, start on the right foot. If you have a spleen ailment or stomach discomfort, start on the left foot. If you make the practice of the Three Immortals your main focus and use exchanging *qi* with nature as a supplement, you will be even more effective in treating diseases. Anyone old or infirm should start by practicing walking for three steps. After you have laid a solid foundation, move on to walking for six steps.

Walking for Six Steps

Posture: Same as above.

Method: Breathe in while walking six steps; breathe out while walking six steps. Walk six steps while inhaling, then walk six steps while exhaling, Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: Same as in walking for three steps.

Note: People with ailments of liver, gallbladder, spleen, or stomach should undertake the practice of the Three Immortals first, then move on to walking for six steps. This is most effective. Walking for six steps works best for women after menopause and in conjunction with the practice of the Three Immortals. It can resolve all sorts of female problems. Intellectuals or manual workers as well anyone free from disease should practice this technique first, then move on to energy balancing.

Holding the Breath for Three Steps

Posture: Same as above.

Method: Breathe in while walking three steps; hold the breath in while walking three steps; breathe out while walking three steps. Walk three steps while inhaling, walk three steps while holding the breath in, then walk three more steps while exhaling. Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: While breathing in, think of *qi* coming from all four sides and eight directions and entering the body through the pores; while holding the breath, think of your entire body as a small universe; while breathing out, think of your skin and hair emitting *qi* all around, the farther and wider the better.

Note: After walking for three steps, move on to holding the breath for three steps. If you have a liver or gallbladder ailment, practice this first, then move on to energy balancing and from there to the practice of the Three Immortals. If you suffer from a spleen or stomach disease, first practice this, then do energy balancing and afterwards move on to the methods of wisdom and potential.

Holding the Breath In for Six Steps

Posture: Same as above.

Method: Breathe in while walking six steps; hold the breath while walking six steps; breathe out while walking six steps. Walk six steps while inhaling, walk six steps while holding the breath, then walk six steps while exhaling. Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: Same as when holding the breath for three steps.

Note: Menopausal women should start with walking, then move on to holding the breath for three and six steps. Once they have mastered this, they should go back to the meditation hall and work on the practice of the Three Immortals.

Holding the Breath In and Out for Three Steps

Position: Same as above

Method: Breathe in while walking three steps; hold the breath in while walking three steps; breathe out while walking three steps; then hold the breath out while walking three steps.

Walk three steps while inhaling, walk three steps while holding the breath in, walk three steps while exhaling, then walk three steps while holding the breath out. Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: While walking and breathing, think of *qi* entering the body through the pores from all four sides and eight directions. While holding the breath in, think of the body as a small universe. While exhaling, think of the

pores emitting *qi* all around, the farther and wider the better. While holding the breath out, think of yourself walking naturally in the clouds.

Note: Holding the breath in two ways forms part of exchanging *qi* with nature and appears as a cultivation method in the *Neigong shu.* People who practice it can use the universe field of their body to enlarge or shrink that of other people. This means, if you lay a solid foundation, you can use your bioelectric field and the *qi* inside your body to treat others.

Holding the Breath In and Out for Six Steps

Position: Same as above.

Method: Breathe in while walking six steps; hold the breath in while walking six steps; breathe out while walking six steps; then hold the breath out while walking six steps. Walk six steps while inhaling, walk six steps while holding the breath in, walk six steps while exhaling, then walk six steps while holding the breath out. Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: Same as when practicing for three steps.

Note: As you get more adept at exchanging *qi* with nature, change the pattern of walking from three to six steps, then move on to twelve and twenty-four. Once you get this far, within your body, "*qi* moves with the universe, the five phases circulate smoothly, the four main senses combine, and intention and *qi* are unified."

Exchanging *qi* with nature comes in three basic dimensions, matching the realms of heaven, earth, and humanity. In ancient times, people believed that practitioners of perfection related to these realms as follows. They saw a sphere when looking straight ahead into the distance until their vision blurred, thus conjuring up the realm of heaven in their imagination; the sphere they could feel but not see was the realm of earth; and the sphere they could see clearly with their ordinary eyes was the realm of humanity.

Part Two

After mastering section one of exchanging *qi* with nature, start on section two.

Posture: Stand still and relaxed, arms hanging down naturally, palms facing the legs, eyes looking straight ahead into the distance toward heaven. Focus spirit light and close your eyes. Rest for a moment, then open your eyes, look straight ahead or around. Let the chest and belly stick out like a pregnant women, fingers pointing to the ground and arms swinging back and forth slightly. The tips of the toes touch the ground and you walk naturally within increasing speed.

Method: Practice for three steps, walking first slow then fast, gradually increasing your speed. Next, move on to practice for six steps, walking as fast as you can. If you feel yourself slowing down, go back to working with three steps.

Throughout, go back and forth between three steps and six steps, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Breathing: Breathe through both the nose and your pores. When walking three steps, breathe in and out through the nose. When walking six steps, breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, then go back to breathing only through the nose as you shift back to working with three steps. When walking six steps, if you manage to be very steady, practice holding the breath both in and out. Walk six steps while inhaling deeply through the nose, walk six steps while holding the breath in, then walk six steps while exhaling through the mouth, and walk six more steps while holding the breath out. Repeat this process, being relaxed and walking naturally.

Intention: As you inhale while walking, think of *qi* coming from all four sides and eight directions and entering the body through the pores; as you exhale, think of *qi* moving out into all four directions, round like a ball, the farther and wider the better. Exhale through the mouth, thinking of releasing all the turbid *qi* from your body.

Once you progress enough to practice holding the breath in and out while walking six steps, you can practice targeted training of the five organs. For example, if you want to refine your kidneys, inhale and think of *qi* coming from all four sides and eight directions through the pores, exerting pressure on the kidneys. Contract and lift them, then hold the breath in and focus on them without moving. Breathe out, releasing turbid *qi* through your mouth as you relax the kidneys. Hold the breath out and keep the kidneys still without moving. Repeat this process several times.

Conclusion: Slow down the speed of walking and steady the body by walking three steps while breathing in and out through the nose. After feeling that the breath is even, conclude the practice.

Things to Note

(1) Exchanging *qi* with nature may sound easy, but the technique is not easy. It is not just walking for three, six, or twelve steps—these are just general guidelines. When practicing, begin with three steps, which you can do even when you are sick. Start by walking slowly and, once you are used to this, shift to walking six steps. After you master this, add holding the breath. If you feel you are out of breath, go back to three steps immediately, lest you harm your body. If you do well with six steps, move on to twelve. Walking fast for twelve steps is not easy and adding the breath-holding is even harder. Ideally you change from three steps to six while walking steadily, but if you cannot do that, that's fine, too.

(2) As you walk for three steps or six steps in one breath, make sure the steps are not big. Walk first slow then fast, then even faster until you reach

your limit. If your body can withstand the pace, walking faster is better, always seeking swiftness in slowness and slowness in swiftness. Each person is different and the speed they can handle is not the same. Doing this for less than ten minutes, the whole body will get hot, but you will not feel tired.

(3) While walking, relax your entire body and mind and think about all the pores while breathing. Breathe through the pores. Inhale and let *qi* from all four sides and eight directions press through your pores, tensing the body like a bow. Exhale and release all the pores, never mind where the *qi* is going. This way, you relax while walking. Breathing should be soft, even, and long.

(4) Walk like a pregnant woman, chest and belly expanded. As the chest expands, make sure to remain upright and have the belly stick out slightly. At the same time, relax your shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands. The fingers point down and are at ease; the tips of the toes touch the ground: you walk relaxed.

(5) The throat is an energy barrier, which is why Daoists call it the Twelve-storied Tower. The esophagus opens when people eat; the trachea opens when people breathe. Both open upon exhalation, so that the *qi* in the lungs and esophagus can escape. When breathing, first inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. Open the mouth slightly while exhaling. All tumors and cancer patients should inhale from the nose and exhale from mouth, which has obvious healing effects.

(6) Relax your entire body, so that the meridians open. Let the fingers point down and slightly swing back and forth, releasing the heart and pericardium meridians. Expand the chest, making your breathing soft, even, and long: this opens the lung meridian. Expand the abdomen to release the bladder and kidney meridians all the way up to the Gate of Destiny in the bladder meridian (not the same as the acupuncture point Gate of Destiny). Moving forward and down, you can also open the upper sections of the stomach and large intestine meridians. When walking with the toes gripping the ground, each step moving forward, the large intestine and stomach meridian connect through the little toe.

(7) Relax your whole body, so that the meridians can open. Even minor errors can prevent the meridians from opening smoothly: for example, if you expand your chest and contract your stomach, the bladder meridian will not release.

(8) Breathing in and out through the five organs has excellent therapeutic effect for patients who have visceral diseases, especially intestinal tumors and cancer. The effect is obvious, but make sure to practice on one organ at a time.

Exchanging *qi* with nature appears in a section of the *Neigong shu*. Master Chunyang, that is, Lü Dongbin, wandered thousands of miles around the country, then ended up at Mount Zhongnan, where he created this system.

His inner nature was pure and lofty. Unwilling to climb the official ladder and become an administrator, he looked everywhere for a place to settle down

and practice. He traveled through the entire country, especially to famous mountains and eventually reached Mount Kongtong. Becoming a student of the reclusive Master Zhongli, he painstakingly practiced the great Daoist cultivation methods. Later he moved to Mount Zhongnan (Shaanxi) and there refined his *qi* and practiced Daoist techniques in a stone cave in the Wenxian Valley, on the south side of Louguantai (Observation Tower). After he became an immortal, the cave was renamed Master Lü's Cavern.

The method now known as exchanging *qi* with nature was created during Master Lü's wandering years and especially during his sojourn on Mount Zhongnan.

Application

Exchanging *qi* with nature forms an important part of the *Neigong shu.* Refining your heart-and-mind, spirit, *qi,* intention, and essence in accordance with its rules, cultivate your body universe. Your posture should be "naturally relaxed and prepared to move;" your intention and mind should be one, focused on thinking:

I am the entire universe.
The universe always changes.
All is in constant motion.
Motion generates life force.
My body is in motion;
My mind is focused and relaxed.
I seek stillness in motion.
From stillness springs spirit.
My mind and spirit combine in oneness;
My *qi* and intention support each other;
The light of my life force constantly changes.

Exchanging *qi* with nature is the best way to transform cosmic and original energies. Under the control of spirit and intention, cosmic *qi* comes from the outside and enters the body to transform into stem *qi,* which in turn is converted inside the body, transforms, and goes back outside. It means that cosmic energy comes into the body and combines with internal energies to turn into stem *qi.* Upon exhalation, the body energies release out so that clear *qi* can enter and turbid *qi* can leave.

Once you get good at this, you can expand or reduce the biological electromagnetic field and the inherent life force of your body. You can also combine, attract, repel, separate, inherit, or restrain the universal energy field and

control the life force of other beings. In addition, you can focus and release this quality to treat diseases, offer divine guidance, disperse *qi,* and guide energy.

Walking while exchanging *qi* with nature is fundamentally different from ordinary walking. Ordinary walking is an unconscious act, done while the mind is wandering outside the body. Ordinary breathing, walking, and thinking are not governed by rules.

During ordinary walking, people's intention is not concentrated. They cannot unify their breathing, walking, and thinking into oneness. Their mind, spirit, intention, and *qi* within the body universe cannot maintain integrated unity and are not aligned in harmony. The interchange of cosmic and stem *qi* between their body and the heavenly universe does not follow any rules; spirit or *qi* have neither shape nor intention. Thus, we say that their mind is scattered and their spirit far off, the *qi* of their body universe keeps going out and tends to stay separate from it.

When practicing exchanging *qi* with nature, therefore, you must follow all the rules for walking, breathing, and thinking, making sure that your mind and spirit stick to your body universe. Through long-term practice, moreover, you can unify, adjust, and stimulate your bio-electromagnetic field and the life force of your body universe. You can fruitfully apply your mind, spirit, *qi,* and intention so your body and the heavenly universe synchronize. Therefore, it is said:

> Mind and spirit in mutual harmony,
> Let spirit revert to the mind.
> As the mind relaxes, spirit arrives.
> As spirit arrives, the mind reverts.
> Essence is full and spirit flourishes,
> As spirit flourishes, the *qi* reverts.

Thus you can fully attain steadiness of breath and nurturing of spirit, a healthy brain and sharp wisdom, the elimination of all ailments and attainment of long life.

Intellectuals commonly feel that their spirit is not really their own, their willpower is not under their control, their essence lacks power, and their body does not follow their mind. This matches the statement, "When essence is damaged *qi* declines, this is when spirit perishes." By practicing Master Lü's method of exchanging *qi* with nature, this can be reversed, so that autumn becomes spring again.

Similarly, if the five organs and six viscera are afflicted by ailments, chronic diseases, or menopausal conditions, exchanging *qi* with nature recreates the balance of yin and yang, restores *qi* and enhances blood function.

Cultivation Process

Exchanging *qi* with nature forms an initial technique in the *Neigong shu.* It divides into three vehicles and nine methods or three sections and nine methods.

Level One: How to eliminate diseases and prolong life, be healthy and find peace and happiness. This comes with three methods:

1. Walking and breathing
2. Walking and holding the breath
3. Walking and gathering energy

Level Two: How all beings return to the root and attain the eternal life of the universe. This comes with three methods:

1. Walking and breathing
2. Walking and dispersing *qi*
3. Walking and managing energy

Level Three: How to transform along with the warp and woof of the cosmos, changing along with heaven and humanity. This has three methods, too:

1. Walking, secret training, and opening the meridians
2. Walking and circulating the life force
3. Walking and concealing the body

Wondrous Effects

The wondrous effect of preparation begin even before exchanging *qi* with nature. Stand still and relax for a minute. The purpose of doing this is to focus spirit as well as the life force of the natural universe and all beings and return them to your body. Focusing spirit means to circulate it in the body, making sure it stays within. In this manner, the stem *qi* of the body universe and the cosmic *qi* of the heavenly universe are retained. Imagine bringing spirit and *qi* into the body, then focus mind, body, and universe, using ordinary respiration to give rise to perfect breathing, exhaling to the far reaches of heaven and inhaling with a focus on the entire universe.

Look straight ahead. The purpose of this is to develop a special skill within the body, that is, to use the eyes to summon, dispatch, and focus spirit. Both eyes look straight ahead to the edge of the horizon to focus on far-off spirit light. Next, close the eyes for a minute. Take the distant spirit light and focus it mentally at the Ancestral Orifice, then guide it from there into the Central Palace. Master Lü said:

The laws of nature are very profound:
Spirit in the Central Palace rules the body.
The body's ruler is a perfected lord.
Governing the life force of billions of beings.

Use the life force of your body universe to assimilate the life force of all beings in the natural universe. To do so, open your eyes and let them look all over, inspecting things and gazing around. As your eyes summon spirit, let spirit and *qi* become one. Essence circulates throughout the body, and the universe is fully natural. From here, you can begin walking to exchange *qi* with nature, feeling as if you are floating in the greater universe.

Breathing and Intentional Thinking

When exchanging *qi* with nature, breathing and thinking are inseparable. If you want to walk using this method, make sure your thinking closely corresponds to your breathing. Both are a form of intentional movement, quite different from ordinary respiration. As you inhale, focus on self, body, and universe. This is different from ordinary breathing, which does not have rules or focused thinking and where *qi* and intention are confused.

In ordinary life, when people walk and inhale, *qi* comes from nature, enters though mouth and nose, then goes to the trachea and into the lungs. When they exhale, it moves from the lungs along the same path and exits into the natural universe. *Qi* is exchanged with nature, but without rules or conscious effort. Ordinary breathing depends mainly on the movement of the chest muscles and the serous membrane.

In contrast, exchanging *qi* with nature has rules and requires particular thinking patterns. Breathe through the pores of the entire body, having them imitate the breathing inside the mother's womb. In the old days, this was called embryo respiration. Always breathe through mouth and nose, matching the breathing through the pores: this is called "unifying spirit and *qi*." Take in *qi* from all four sides and eight directions of the natural universe and inhale it through all the body's pores. As you exhale, think of *qi* releasing into the distance while yet focusing it inside. During inhalation, feel an electromagnetic attraction and listen carefully; during exhalation, use your innermost being to vigorously push spirit and *qi* into the far distance. For this, develop strong tension and stretching power.

Daoists believe that the New Year starts at the beginning of spring. This matches the transit point of the *hai* and *zi* hours in the course of a day. That is, the beginning of spring matches the end of the *hai* and the beginning of the *zi* hour (11 p.m.). According to the Chinese tradition, the beginning of spring determines the entire year's calendar. According to Daoism, you must release

all turbid *qi* before the beginning of spring. Once it has gone, you can wait for New Year's Day, when yang *qi* starts to rise (around midnight), then begin to absorb new energy. The best way to release turbid *qi* is by exchanging *qi* with nature.

This section describes how to cultivate the ability of sensing the outside, of feeling nature and the outside world. It lays the foundation for learning more sensing techniques. Long-term practice not only benefits yourself, but also allows you to affect others. When you practice on others, be sure to be fully aware that "the heaven and earth in this body sense the heaven and earth outside it. Those outside closely match those within. There is a ruler within who causes the *qi* of the heaven and earth to return to the body. If there were no ruler, the *qi* of heaven and earth within would continue to leave. Under these circumstances, you cannot attain Dao, but will suffer great loss."

Chapter Five

Energy Balancing

Energy balancing is a form of external mastery presented in the *Neigong shu*, an ancient art of absorbing the new and expelling the old. Through the orderly movement of your body, coordinated with a strict breathing regimen using intention, *qi,* and the hundred orifices, you exchange life force with plants, animals, and other people. As a result, the electromagnetic field of your and their body universe join together. You issue invisible, formless matter from your body universe and exchange it via *qi,* blood, and marrow with that of plants, animals, and other people. In this way, you exchange life force, eventually reaching a perfect match. This is energy balancing. In ancient times, it was efficacious in treating different types of tumors, visceral hematoceles, lumps, and abscesses.

As a beginner, best start working with trees, since "people living in this world are floating without roots." In other words, once infants have left their mother's womb, their bodies are rootless, depending on water and grain to grow, containing distinct paths of *qi,* blood, and excretion. Trees naturally grow from roots that reach deep into the earth. Without blood or lymph, they yet also have distinct paths of *qi,* blood, and excretion. Trees are tall and stable; they form part of the natural world. Exchanging life force with them is beneficial and does no harm.

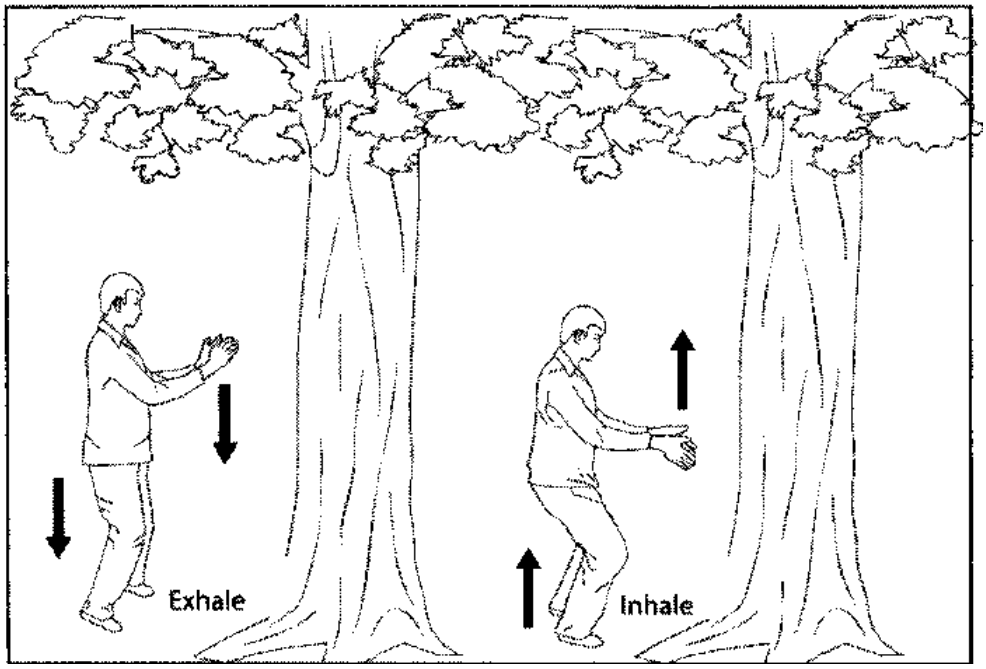
Stationary Tree Practice

This comes in nine forms, including five basic or fundamental patterns.

1. Moving Both Hands Up and Down

Posture and Movement: Begin by facing a tree, standing with your feet about shoulder-width apart. Your knees are slightly bent and your arms hang naturally to the sides of the thighs. Close your eyes, look straight ahead, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. Stand still for a while. Next, raise the arms and stretch them forward horizontally, armpits free, palms flat and open. Now lift the palms and have them face the

tree. Make sure to stay at a certain distance from the tree, depending on your skill.



Typically, the distance between palms and tree trunk is about one third of the trunk's diameter. Beginners close their eyes; more experienced practitioners keep them open. Either way, move both hands parallel along the trunk in an up-and-down motion, allowing the legs and arms to move up and down also. Let the knees bend and straighten very slowly, keep the spine straight and upright. How far you bend and straighten depends on your flexibility, age, and physique.

Breathing: Breathing during energy balancing should closely match the movements, coordinating inhalation and exhalation with the body's up-and-down movements. Inhale when moving up; exhale when moving down. Throughout, breathe increasingly soft, even, long, slow, and subtle.

Intention: Keep your thinking on the surface of your palms and the tree in front of you. The tree is a *qi* pillar of a specific color, and as your palms release *qi* of the same color, you start to exchange life force with it.

2. Slicing Vertically with All Ten Fingers

Posture and Movement: Begin as above. Stand facing the tree, feet about shoulder-width apart, both arms hanging naturally to the sides of the thighs. Close your eyes, look straight ahead, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. After standing still for a while, stretch both arms forward horizontally, armpits free, palms flat and open. Have all ten fingers point at the tree. Keep a certain distance from the tree, matching your skill

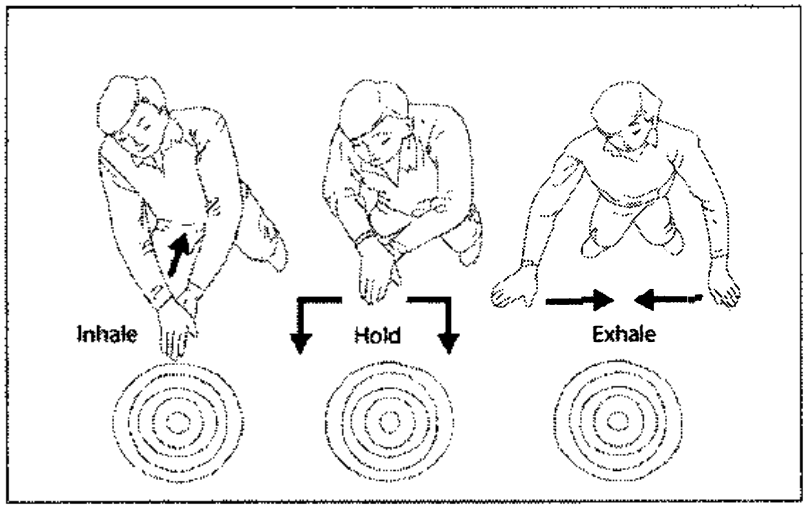
level and gradually increasing it. Next, have the palms facing each other slicing the tree with the fingertips in an up-and-down motion, the thinner the better. As you slice the tree with your fingertips, move the body slightly up and down, bending at the knees and letting the arms move along. Hands should be about at shoulder height. Beginners and the elderly should practice less intensely, keeping the arms neither too high nor low.

Breathing: Breathing should be even, and closely coordinated with the up-and-down movement of body and arms. Never stop halfway, but keep arms and fingers level and upright. Inhale when moving up; exhale when moving down. Throughout, breathe increasingly soft, even, long, slow, and subtle.

Intention: As you point the tips of all ten fingers toward the tree, imagine it as a tall, giant pillar of *qi* and see yourself releasing *qi* of the same color from all ten fingertips. Let the *qi* flow together into one point or one line, producing an invisible mass of force that penetrates the tree and slices the pillar of *qi* before your eyes into thin strips, the finer the better.

3. Slicing Horizontally with All Ten Fingers

Posture and Movement: Stand in the same way as described above, but turn your hands from upright to level, palms facing down. Other than that, prepare as before.



Keep both hands open and level, palms facing down. Now slice horizontally to the right and left with both palms in front of the tree. The height of the movement is about at mid-chest, and the two palms are stacked on top of each other. Next, separate the palms, keeping the tips of all ten fingers pointing at the tree and slice in an arc. Again slice horizontally at mid-chest level, keeping the palms stacked, then spread both arms as wide as you can and allow the palms to curve out while continuing the slicing motion. Allow the legs to bend and straighten, moving up and down as you keep slicing horizontally—how far you go depends on your body.

Breathing: Keep the hands level and open, palms facing down, fingertips pointing at the tree. Place the hands on top of each other and spread them out horizontally. Inhale when spreading. Next, when the hands are sepreated in front of the chest, hold the breath in as you move the hands toward the tree in an arc. Exhale once the fingertips get close to the tree. Slice at the tree using all ten fingers, then stack the hands once more. Pull them forward in front of the chest and inhale. Repeat. Breathing should be soft, even, long, slow, and subtle.

Intention: As your ten fingers slice the tree horizontally, think of them as releasing some kind of substance. Slice the big pillar of *qi* before your eyes into fine sections, the thinner the better. When all ten fingers are in front of the chest, hold the breath and balance the energy, remaining without any particular thoughts or intention. This requires good coordination of breathing.

4. Pushing with Both Palms

Posture and Movement: Stand to prepare in the same way as described above. Stand comfortably, facing the tree for a while. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. Stretch both hands forward horizontally, palms facing down, fingertips pointing toward the tree. Next, draw them in toward the chest. When you get close to the chest, turn the palms so they are upright at a ninety-degree angle, palms facing the tree. Slowly push them forward. When both arms are fully extended, drop the fingers down, coming back to a horizontal position, so that the fingertips all point toward the tree. Keep the palms facing down and pull them in toward the chest. Once they get close, turn them upright again and push forward. As you push forward and pull back, let the body move slightly up and down.

Breathing: With both palms upright at a ninety-degree angle, exhale and slowly push both arms toward the tree. Then stretch the hands horizontally, palms facing down. Inhale and point the tips of all ten fingers at the tree right at chest height. As you inhale, let the body move slightly either down or up, but do not move while exhaling. Keep the spine straight. Make sure the breathing is soft, even, long, slow, and subtle.

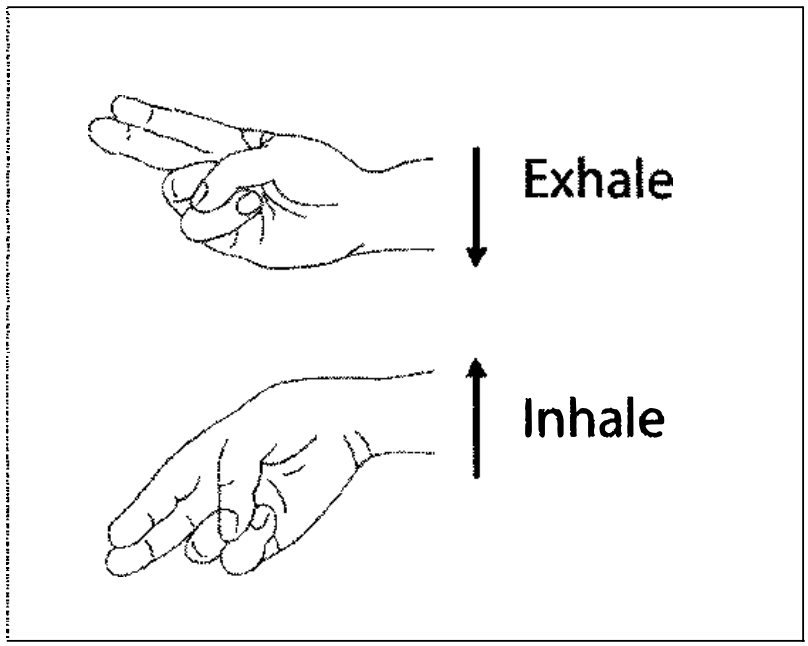
Intention: Imagine the tree before your eyes as a big pillar of *qi*. As you push your palms forward, envision them releasing a *qi* substance of a certain color that matches the life force of the tree. Push into it with some tension. Keep both hands stretched horizontally and maintain the intention to push into the big pillar of *qi* as you pull your hands back.

5. Sword Form

Posture and Movement: Stand to prepare as described above. Stand comfortably, facing the tree for a while. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. This time, keep the index and middle fingers close together and completely straight as you point them at

the tree. Use the thumb to hold the ring and little fingers in place. In the old days, this hand gesture was known as the "sword." Use this on the tree, slicing it both vertically and horizontally as you move up and down. You can make a hole in the tree doing this.

Breathing: When slicing vertically, exhale as you slice down and inhale as you pull up. When slicing horizontally, inhale as you pull in and exhale as you push out.

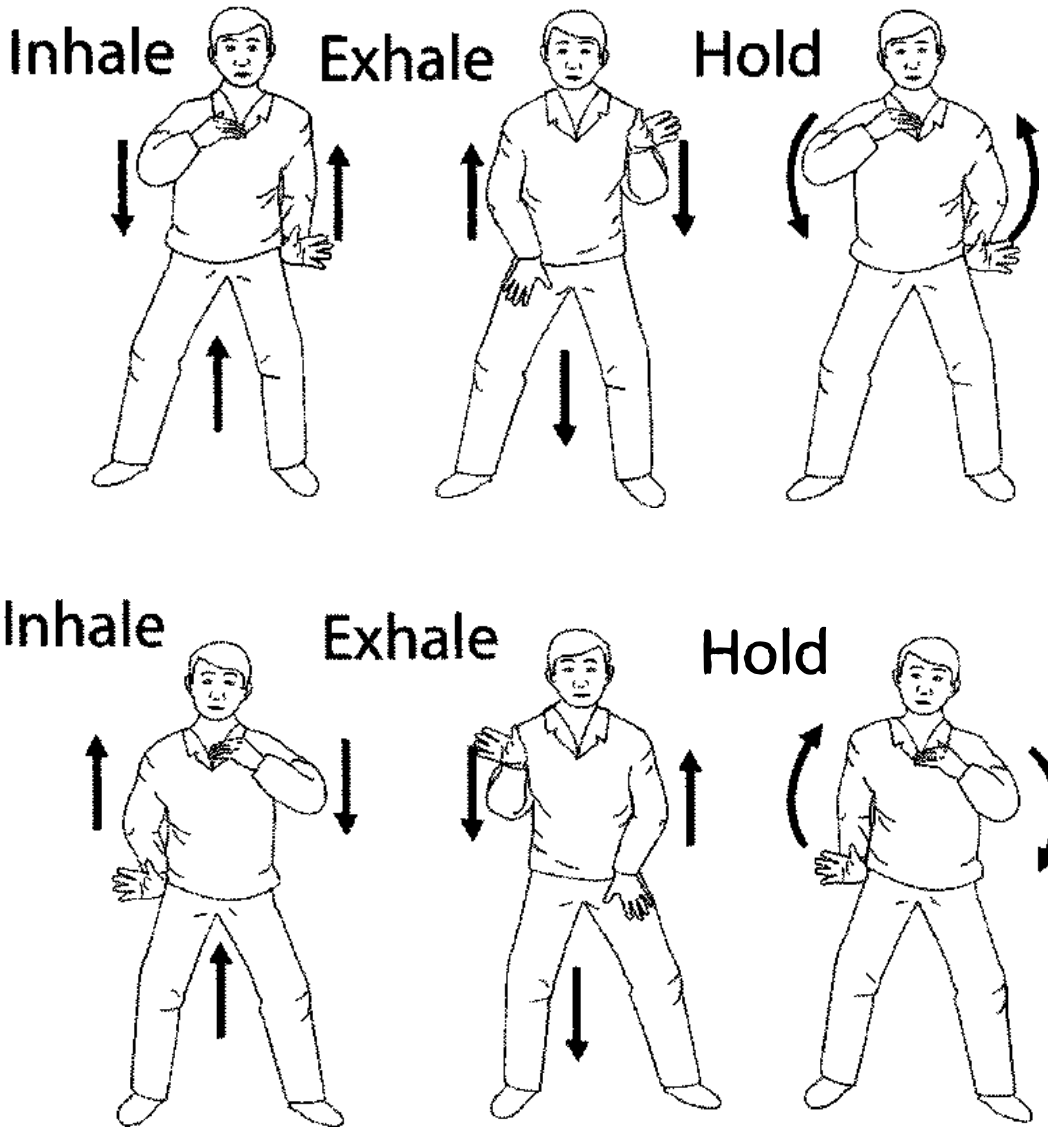


Intention: In the old days, the tip of the middle finger was known as the "sword head." It emits a kind of life force that allows you to slice even a very big pillar of *qi* into thin strips. Maintain the intention to penetrate the tree.

6. Single Palm Splitting

Posture and Movement: Stand to prepare as described above. Stand comfortably, facing the tree for a while. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. Stretch both arms forward, keeping the left palm facing down, fingertips pointing toward the tree. Turn the right palm up so it, too, faces the tree. Now, move the left palm up and, at the same time, the right hand down along the tree. Let the left hand curve out to form a downward semicircle, keeping its palm pointing at the center of the tree. At the same time, let the right hand curve outwards to form an upward semicircle, keeping the fingertips pointing at the tree. Keeping the palm facing down, move the left hand up along the tree, while at the same time letting the right hand press down along it. Then move the left hand down and the right hand up, going back and forth along the tree. Move both hands as far as

they will go. As the right hand curves out to form a downward semicircle, its palm facing the tree, the left hand curves out to form an upward semicircle, its fingertips against the center of the tree. As you move the right hand up, press the left hand down along it. Repeat again and again. The slower the better.



Wrists and knees move in the same way as in the first form, but never raise any hand above eyebrow level. When moving both hands up and down, relax and move hips, shoulders, elbows and wrists at the same time. Keep the left and right sides of the body well balanced. Also, keep the turning radius as small as possible, making it gradually bigger.

Breathing: Inhale with the fingertips facing toward the center of the tree as you move one hand down and the other one up, making sure the palms face the center of the tree. Exhale with the fingertips facing the center of the tree as you move one hand up and the other one down, making sure the palms face the center of the tree. Hold the breath as the hands form a semicircle at the

same time. Inhale, contract the abdomen and lift the hips; exhale and return to ordinary.

Intention: Inhale and let the intention be strong, fingertips press toward the center of the tree with some vigor, as the palm of the other hand lifts the center of the tree with some strength. Exhale and release the strength you use to lift and press. Hold the breath and imagine forming a ball between your hands.

Working with Movement

Energy balancing with movement forms another part of the *Neigong shu*. It is an ancient technique of absorbing the new and expelling the old. Practitioners work with regular body movements and strict footwork, coordinated with special ways of breathing and in close combination with spirit, *qi,* and intention. It works by moving *qi* in the body—push, pull, squeeze, press, turn, grasp, hit, and send—then releasing it out. Using specific limb movements, you can release it through both hands, moving the *qi* of the body universe outside and thus stimulate the arousal of matching *qi* in others. You can also take the cosmic *qi* of the natural universe and bring it into your body—again using the actions of push, pull, squeeze, press, turn, grasp, hit, and send. Using specific limb movements, you can release certain substances from both hands, absorbing the *qi* of the natural universe and transforming it into your personal stem *qi*. This causes prenatal and primordial stem *qi* to circulate in the body, just as postnatal *qi* merges with the heavenly bodies. It is a unique technique.

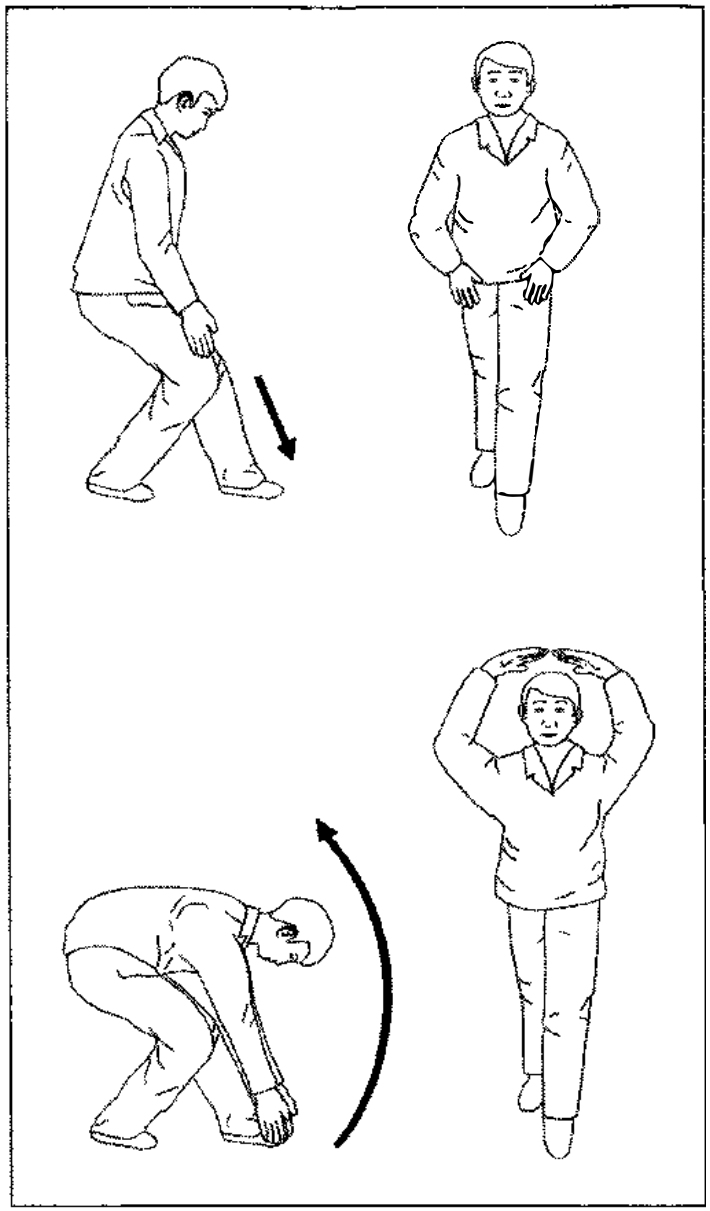
Energy balancing with movement consists mainly of cultivating subtle materials and the biological electromagnetic field in the body. It forms the foundation of absorbing and expelling the *qi* of the five phases from the outside and of circulating it along the heavenly circuit through the twelve meridians. The practice divides into nine forms, of which the first two are introduced here: they are open to everyone.

Pushing Along the Paired Meridians

Preparation: Stand facing a tree or plant, with feet slightly apart and arms hanging down at ease, touching the sides of the thighs. Relaxed and still, focus mind, body, and universe. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. Stand relaxed and naturally for a while, then open both eyes, keeping the upper body upright and straight.

Movement: Rotate the hands touching the sides of the thighs, turning the palms forward and raising both arms to a horizontal level. Lift the *qi* as you curving both arms upward, the wider the better. Now step back half a step with either foot—up to you which one—making sure both actions occur at the same

time: lifting the *qi* by curving the arms and stepping one foot back. The movement should be slow and well-coordinated.



Still lifting the *qi,* arms curving upward and one foot stepped back, begin to squat down right in place, allowing the arms to rise up to the top of the head. Now change the hand form from lifting the *qi* to pressing it by turning the palms down. Press the cosmic *qi* of the natural universe into your body universe, moving it with both hands all the way from the top of the head through the head and chest to the lower field. As you move the *qi* with both hands and press it into the lower field, keep your eyes on your hands to actively combine spirit, intention, and *qi.*

Next, as you move another half step back, straighten the front leg, so the toes point toward the tree or plant. Set the front foot down and step lightly on it, shifting your center of gravity on the back leg, which bends so you can squat down. The legs should touch both at the crotch and at the knees. If you are young and strong, straighten the front leg as far as possible and lower the back leg to get into a low squat. Beginners tend to be unstable during this movement; those elderly, weak, or sick should not make the movement too drastic.Lift the *qi* while curving the hands near the top of the head, then rotate them to press the *qi* down. At the same time, take another half step back and squat down. Press the *qi* all the way from the top of the head through the head, chest and abdomen to the lower field. Keep both hands apart at the lower field, curve them, and begin to push the *qi* down and out. Take the hands from the lower field at the abdomen and push them along the straightened front leg, pushing the *qi* out of the body all the way from the lower abdomen through thighs, knees, calves, and feet to

the toes. Once you have pushed the *qi* out, change the hands from pushing to lifting the *qi,* both palms facing up. At this point, begin to lift the *qi* with both hands and move the other foot back. You repeat this for three steps back, then move three steps forward. Do the movements as described here.

In this exact way, take three steps back and three steps forward. Repeat until the practice is complete, which can take either a long or a short time. As you push the *qi* with both hands, place them on both sides of the thighs which are stretched forward, keeping the palms diagonally facing down on the thighs. In this matter, push the *qi* downward and out through the toes.

Conclusion: When you are ready to conclude the practice, simply move the back leg a half step forward to your center of gravity; alternatively move the front leg a half step back. Place both legs in a balanced standing position and keep the entire body upright and straight. With both hands press the *qi* from the top of the head through head, chest, and abdomen into the lower field. Once you curve the hands in, stack them on top of each other and rest the palms against the lower abdomen (right on left, or vice versa). Stand like this for a while to conclude the practice.

Exhalation: As you press the *qi* with both hands into the lower abdomen, curve the hands in and separate them, turn the palms to face down and away to push the *qi* out. Begin to exhale while the palms press against the lower abdomen and continue as they push the *qi* out, all the way from the lower abdomen along both sides of the thighs to the toes. This is called exhaling until the *qi* is pushed out through the toes. Use both hands to push the *qi* out in this manner, then inhale again.

Inhalation: After you have pushed the *qi* out through the toes with both hands, move your hands from pushing to lifting *qi* and begin to inhale. Lift the *qi* to the top of the head with both hands, then change the hands from lifting to pressing the *qi* down. Inhale as the *qi* travels all the way from the head through the chest and the lower abdomen to the lower field. Let the *qi* flow into the lower abdomen, curve and separate the hands there and change the hand position from pressing down to pushing *qi* out. At this point, begin to exhale.

Notes on Breathing: Breathing should be soft, even, long, slow, and subtle. The interval between exhalation and inhalation should be even. Keep up the process of inhalation and exhalation until the practice is complete.

Intention: As you press the *qi* into the lower abdomen, curve both hands and separate them, then rotate them out and change the palm position from pressing to pushing, place both palms on the lower field at the lower abdomen and think of releasing life force into it. From here, push the stem *qi* of the lower field into the thighs, with both hands pushing it down along the sides of the straightened forward leg. As you push it all the way to the toes, think of releasing *qi* into the bone marrow through your hands, then circulate it back to the lower field and again to the toes. As you push the stem *qi* out of the body, it

merges with the cosmic *qi* of heaven. As the text has it, "Push the internal stem *qi* flowing in the body; guide it through the bones into the marrow. Cosmic *qi* flows outside throughout the universe: let it circulate to join the primordial *qi* within."

After you have pushed the *qi* to the toes and out with both hands, begin to inhale. As you inhale, image you are lifting the cosmic *qi* of the natural universe upward with both palms, gathering it from all four sides and eight directions into your body universe. Lift it all the way to the top of the head, then change the position of both hands from lifting to pressing down. Press the *qi* with the palms facing down, thinking of pushing the cosmic *qi* of the natural universe into your body universe.

Circulate the primordial *qi* of heaven in your body, pressing the *qi* out and guiding it internally with both hands. Let it flow into the lower field, separate the hands, change them to a pushing position and begin to exhale. Repeat the practice until complete. "Lift and press the *qi* to move, let it flow into the universe. External cosmic *qi* pushes internal stem *qi* and primordial *qi* reverts to the lord".

Pushing with Both Palms

Preparation: The preparation is the same as in the previous practice.

Movement: Let the arms hang loosely along the sides of the thighs and rotate the hands in, so the palms face back. Now, raise the arms to shoulder height, so the hands are parallel to the ground, palms facing down. Draw both hands back while pulling back both arms. As you draw the hands back, let the tips of all ten fingers point at the tree. Draw the hands close to the chest, turn the palms to face up, but keep them facing the tree.

Next, slowly raise the arms, take a half step back with the right or left foot (either one is soft) and squat down. All this happens at the same time—raising the arms and taking a half step back—making sure the movement is steady and smooth. As you take a half step back, straighten the forward leg (beginners should keep their toes facing the tree or plant). Shift your center of gravity on the back leg, bent and squatting. The legs touch both at the crotch and at the knees.

While squatting, keep your hands drawn close to the chest. As you begin to stand up, let the palms be upright, face the tree, and push toward it with vigor. Let both palms push horizontally toward the tree, getting as close as one inch from it. Rotate the palms to point the tips of all ten fingers at the tree. From here, pull them back to the chest and again let the hands be upright, palms facing the tree. As you pull the hands back, take a step back. Take three steps back, then three steps forward, drawing and pointing the hands with each step. After you take three steps forward, take three steps back. Repeat until the practice is complete. You decide for how long to continue.

Exhalation: Begin to exhale when you change the palm position with both hands drawn close to the chest. Then, with both palm facing the tree, push

forward with vigor. Exhale while pushing toward the tree with both palms, until you reach the intended place. Then, as you turn the palms over so the fingers point at the tree, begin to inhale.

Inhalation: You inhale first when both palms are pushed horizontally to within one inch of the tree, all fingers facing it, then continue while pulling back. Once you have drawn both hands to the chest, rotate the palms to upright and begin to exhale.

Notes on Breathing: Breathing should be soft, even, long, slow, and subtle. The interval between exhalation and inhalation should be even. Keep up the process of inhalation and exhalation until the practice is complete.

Conclusion: When you are ready to conclude the practice, simply move the back leg a half step forward to your center of gravity; alternatively move the leg in front a half step back from where the foot is resting lightly on the ground. Stand straight on both legs, body upright and erect, hands pulled back to in front of the chest. Move the hands close to the chest, then lightly drop them to both sides of the thighs. Now change to Wuji standing. Stand still for a while and conclude the practice.

Intention: As you stand with your palms upright, facing the tree, think of them emitting a kind of resisting penetrative force, pushing straight forward. Use your intention to bend the tree in front of the eyes. After pushing the palms to the desired place, rotate the palms from upright to level. Pull back from the tree with the tips of all ten fingers pointing at it, using both intention and *qi*. Merge the two to pull on and bend the tree—as you pull back, so it follows. In the old days, this was known as one form of "absorbing *qi* through the energy passage ways". The text says, "Push on trees matching the five phases: poplar, willow, cedar, cypress and pine. The practice of pulling in cosmic *qi* and flowing stem *qi* is the most profound mystery in the universe".

Theory and Origin

Energy balancing forms part of the *Neigong shu*. It represents an ancient method of absorbing the new and expelling the old. Practitioners align themselves mentally with the heavenly bodies—stars, sun, moon—and the myriad beings. "Move on the outside while remaining still within, give rise to phenomena on the outside while imagining things within. Expel sounds and absorb shapes, guide yin and restrain yang, advance yang and hide yin, thus moving life force through the universe." The aim of energy balancing is to coagulate original energy in the body, enabling you to gather and emit it freely. Once you can do so, you can use it to transform energy and move it around among the organs.Energy balancing goes back to Yu the Great. One night while he was taming the flood, Yu passed through a forest on Mount Ji and discovered a flock of sparrows with sharp, pointed beaks and long, slender legs. Some of them

were lifting stones larger than themselves with their beak, able to move and even throw them. Yu thought that if sparrows could do that, human beings should do even better. He then tried to push a stone larger than himself, but he could not budge it and his mind was full of doubt. When he passed the mountain the next time, he carefully observed the sparrows' actions, noting that their walking steps followed a regular pattern. They would face an immovable stone, then walk around it at a regular pace. After completing their walk, they were able to move the stone.

Next, Yu discovered that the sparrows used fixed sets of steps: three, five, seven, eight, nine, swift, crossed, or twisted. As they stepped, they would look up to heaven, stand still for a moment, then again step in a regular pattern. Regardless of how large the stone was, the flock of sparrows would gather around it and use either eight or nine steps, then push it with their long beaks to move or even throw it. At this time, he realized a key secret: the myriad beings of the world can merge energetically with the heavenly bodies. Like the little sparrows on the mountain, they can observe heaven, earth, sun, moon, and all creatures, and practice accordingly, matching their actions to specific constellations in the sky. Since each being's functions are different, the various practices to match and merge energy are also not the same.

Yu soon applied the methods he saw demonstrated by the sparrows. Looking up to observe heaven and earth, yin and yang, stars and constellations, sun and moon, the five phases and the myriad beings, he learned not only how to move a stone larger than himself, but also how to apply regular stepping to split rocks, open mountains and gain unlimited strength. He later created a comprehensive description of all the methods he learned during his life by observing the universe, the heavenly bodies and the myriad beings, thus developing many secret techniques of guiding yin and yang and controlling the five phases and the Heavenly Net. Later generations compiled all this into various texts, such as the divination manual *Qimen dunjia* (Strange Gates to Controlling the Stems [and Branches]), the technical work *Wanfa guizong* ((The Ancestor of the Myriad Methods), and the more theoretical *Santian mifa* (Secret Methods of the Three Heavens).

The particular methods of guiding yin and yang and controlling the five phases and the Heavenly Net were passed down to Master Lü. He then summed up the techniques used by his predecessors and developed energy balancing using the five methods and six *qi*. He also created yin-yang boxing, five thunder boxing, the intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams, and guiding the life force through the nine palaces and eight trigrams. More specifically, he divided energy balancing into three vehicles and nine methods.

Lesser Vehicle: release and receive, practice facing the myriad beings, practice in nature, plus various methods to eliminate disease and strengthen the body.

Middle Vehicle: penetrate and break through, practice facing heaven and earth, practice matching the five phases, plus various methods to defend the body and protect the self.

Great Vehicle: subdue others and control people, practice facing the universe, practice in open space, plus various methods to fight evil and do good.

Energy balancing comes in several forms: fixed steps, three steps, five steps, seven steps, eight steps and nine steps. Each has three vehicles and nine forms, intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams and the method of guiding the life force through the nine palaces and eight trigrams divide into forms of heaven, earth, and humanity, each with three vehicles and nine methods.

Energy balancing always involves "moving body and limbs" in close accordance with regulated breathing, matching intention and *qi,* and connecting the body through the numerous orifices to heaven and earth, stars and constellations, sun and moon, as well as the myriad beings to exchange information of life force with them. Look up to observe the universe, heavenly bodies, stars and constellations, sun and moon, as well as all the different phenomena of the myriad beings. As you get better at it, you reach a close balance of life force with the heavenly bodies, plants, animals, and other people.

Energy balancing mainly works by imagining the heavenly bodies and aligning yourself with them, thus causing various subtle materials within the body and its biological electric field to emit and receive a potent charge. The practices are done individually, but can also be undertaken with others. In the old days, they were also used to treat various kinds of carbuncles, visceral hematoceles, lumps, and abscesses. Today, they have a certain effect in treating cancer.

Beginners should start the practice by working with trees, since "people live in this world but float around without roots." In other words, after babies are born, they take on human form and become rootless bodies, relying on nourishment through grains for growth and utilizing the "paths of *qi,* blood, and excretion" in the body. Trees, in contrast, grow naturally from roots, which extend deep into the earth. Although they have no blood, they yet have various paths of *qi,* blood, and excretion. In addition, they are tall and stable, making the mutual exchange of life force both beneficial and harmless.

The best object to practice *qi* exchange for energy balancing is a tree. Although trees have no blood circulation, they possess a tissue system to absorb nutrients and circulate water. Big and tall as well as sturdy and stable, they contain a bright light of an obvious color. People of old believed that interacting with plants was a way to exchange *qi* and matter, that is, life force. Connecting in a fruitful exchange and reaching a clear mutual match is the ultimate purpose of energy balancing.

Trees have a variety of pigments. Experiments with these practices have shown clearly that pine trees emit a green or blue color, while willows are white,

cypresses are black, apple trees and cedars are red, and so on. As you practice energy balancing with these trees, you match the five colors they emit with those of your organs. According to ancient Chinese medical theory, the five organs each have a unique colors. For example, the heart is red, spleen and stomach are yellow, kidney and urinary bladder are black, liver and gall bladder are green or blue, and the lungs are white. These five colors are those of the five phases. Based on the doctrine of yin-yang and the five phases, the system of their mutual generation, control, enhancement, and restraint, the interaction allows you to make progress and heal diseases, creating numerous practical effects. The various correspondences are listed in the following table:

Phase	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Organ	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lung	Kidney
Tree	Pine	Cedar	Willow	Poplar	Cypress
Color	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black

You thus come to understand the relationship between the five phases, the inner organs, the various trees, and their colors as well as the system of mutual generation and control among yin and yang and the five phases. To apply all this in concrete reality, practice in close accordance with your body and health. Depending on which internal organ has an ailment, find a tree of similar color to practice by standing and facing it. "Stand and face" here means that you match the colors of the five organs and those of the trees to mutually balance their energy. For example, if you have an ailment in the liver or gallbladder, best face a pine tree; as a cardiac patient, you should work with a cedar or apple tree; should you suffer from spleen or stomach diseases, face a willow; respiratory sufferers connect to poplars; and if you have renal or urinary issues, connect to a cypress. Practicing in close coordination with the five phases can enhance the results and greatly improve its curative effect.

If you suffer from a disease, make sure to work first on the methods of wisdom and potential. Once you have discerned your particular illness and its ultimate cause, you can find a matching tree to practice. For example, if you have a liver ailment, but it is caused by an insufficiency of kidney fluid, first work on exchanging energy with a poplar tree to replenish kidney fluid and only then work facing a pine tree to exchange *qi* with it to heal your liver. Each practice should be based on the etiology of the disease, so we have to understand it properly, requiring medical knowledge. If you have no obvious ailment in any organ, just practice according the generating cycle of the five phases.

Always during energy balancing, make sure your spine is straight and upright, the head is held high toward heaven and the coccyx points at earth. Ideally practice for an hour to one and a half, including standing still with your back to the tree for a while to conclude. Pull up and down about four times per minute, gradually extending the time and generally moving the slower the better.

Chapter Six

Pacing and Ball Practice

When Yu tamed the flood, he imitated how little birds moved around on the ground, studying their movements and ways of breathing, and in due course he was able to lift stones much heavier than he. From this we can see that the Pace of Yu works with external energy. Ever since the taming of the great flood, ancient masters have been studying how best to practice the Pace of Yu. To this day, the practice is still evolving, because the constellations in the sky change over time. The seven stars of the Northern Dipper that people saw in antiquity quite possibly are not the same we see today and it seems the constellation is now smaller. These stars have a great impact on the earth and human life, and through practice you can sense and comprehend it.

After Yu studied the birds' stepping, his strength grew and he was never tired. He duly developed and transmitted three methods of pacing: Pacing the Seven Stars, Pacing the Eight Trigrams of the Heavenly Net (also known as Pacing the Prenatal Eight Trigrams), and Pacing the Taiji Jade Perfection. Later generations added Pacing King Wen's Eight Trigrams (also known as Pacing the Postnatal Eight Trigrams). Here we will introduce the first two.

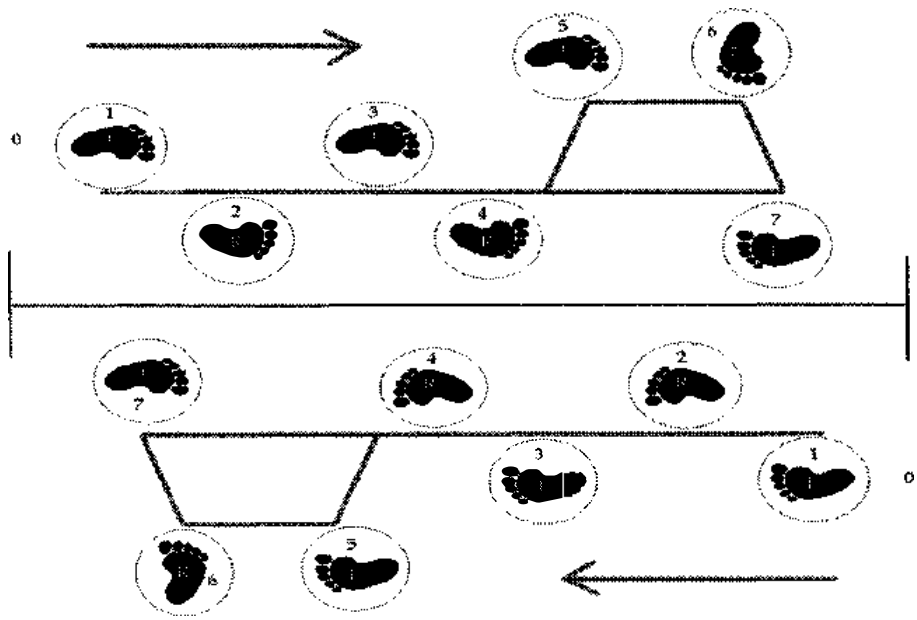
Pacing the Seven Stars

Before undertaking this practice, first become proficient in basic walking methods, hand gestures, and breathing techniques. Also, make sure you are familiar with the relevant chants or spells. Only then can you move on to pacing.

Preparation: Find an open area or spacious meadow and stand still and relaxed, with both arms hanging naturally down. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. Steady your breathing, so it becomes soft, even, and long, and flows regularly. As your entire breath becomes steady, it turns into the breath of your body universe, which joins the breath of the heavenly universe and that which carries perfect breathing. These four kinds of breaths happen all at the same time (That is, inhale and guide the *qi* down below the navel; exhale, and let it rise but not beyond the heart. Focus self, body, and the universe as you inhale deep into the body, then exhale completely). The practice lets stem *qi* coagulate in the lower

field. Subsequently, silently circulate the five phases and conclude by reverting the stem *qi* into the lower field. Steady the breath of the body universe and wait until all the different aspects and parts of the body are fully integrated. Now you are ready to practice pacing the seven stars.

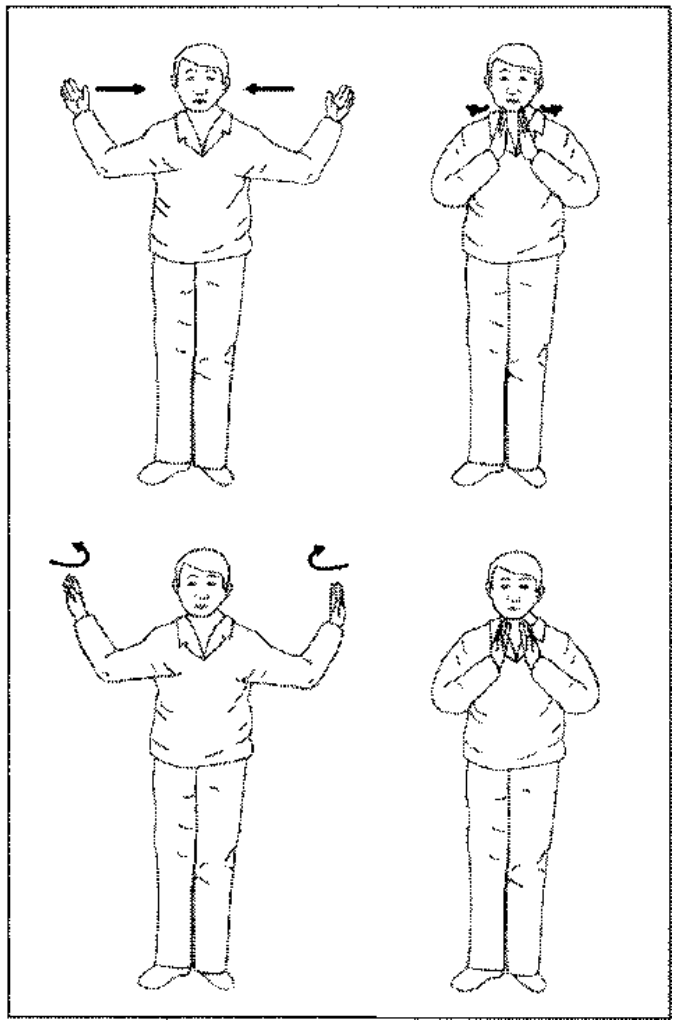
Basic Steps: Starting from position 0, drag the left foot forward along the ground. After the left foot reaches position 1, drag the right foot forward along the ground so it reaches position 2. Move forward like this, letting the left foot reach positions 3 and 5, while the right foot reaches positions 4 and 6. Pivot the left foot to position 7 and step the right foot to position 7 as well, so it is side by side with the left foot. (The feet are slightly apart, that is, place the right foot on position 0 which is next to position 7). At this time, rotate the body 180 degrees and again let the left foot step on positions 1, 3 and 5, while the right foot steps on positions 2, 4 and 6. When the left foot reaches position 7, the right foot comes to match it. Again, rotate 180 degrees and keep practicing back and forth.



Basic Hand Techniques: Place the hands in front of the chest, fingertips pointing upward. With the palms facing each other, open both arms wide toward the sides of the body. At the same time, push the upright palms out. When you have pushed them up to about 80 percent, rotate both hands so the palms face each other. Begin to squeeze them together and, when the hands are about to touch, again rotate both palms to push out. Continue the cycle, moving them out and in. Note that when you rotate the palms, the movement is rather small. Also, rotate the fingers from inside to outside by 360 degrees along the midline of the body, turn the wrists to face out, then rotate them back in and turn the palms from facing each other to being back to back.

These three movements should be completed simultaneously and done in complete sync, which allows you to do them properly. When rotating the hands

from pressing in to separating out and vice versa, make sure the movement is done neatly, the quicker the better.



Breathing: Exhale when separating the hands out, inhale when pressing them together. Now, recite the following chant"

The unified stem *qi* of primordial chaos washes over my physical form.
Through the Pace of Yu, I push to ascend to yang brightness.
Heaven circulates and earth revolves, as I walk through the Six Jia [positions of time].
I tread through the Net and walk on the Dipper, matching its nine stars.
I point to subdue demons, and the host of evil influences is frightened.
The gods of heaven assist me and render my body invisible.
No disasters or calamities dare to encroach.

Combining all these aspects, you can now begin pacing the seven stars of the Heavenly Net.

Starting with both feet in position 0, drag the left foot forward along the ground, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and chant: "The unified stem *qi* of primordial chaos washes over me."

As the left foot steps to position 1, drag the right foot forward along the ground, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and chant: "Through the Pace of Yu I, push to ascend to yang brightness."

Next, as the right foot steps to position 2, drag the left foot forward along the ground and recite the line: "Heaven circulates and earth revolves as I walk through the Six Jia."

As the left foot steps to position 3, drag the right foot forward along the ground, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and chant: "I tread through the Net and walk on the Dipper, matching its nine stars."

As the right foot steps to the position 4, let the left foot continue to move forward and to the right, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and chant: "I point to subdue demons, and the host of evil influencs if frightened."

As the left foot steps into position 5, let the right foot move forward from behind, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing, and chant: "The gods of heaven assist me and render my body invisible."

Next, as the right foot steps on position 6, have the left foot move obliquely forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing, and chant: "No disasters or calamities dare to encroach."

Finally, as the left foot steps to position 7, drag the right foot along the ground to also step to position 7. Rotate your body by 180 degrees and go back to the starting point in just the same manner of practice. Repeat this cycle diligently, so you can attain its mystery and wonder.

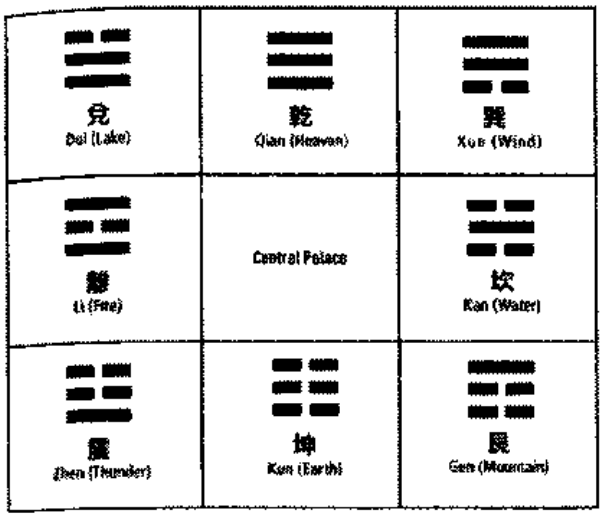
Conclusion: After returning to position 0, steady your natural breathing for a moment, then conclude the practice.

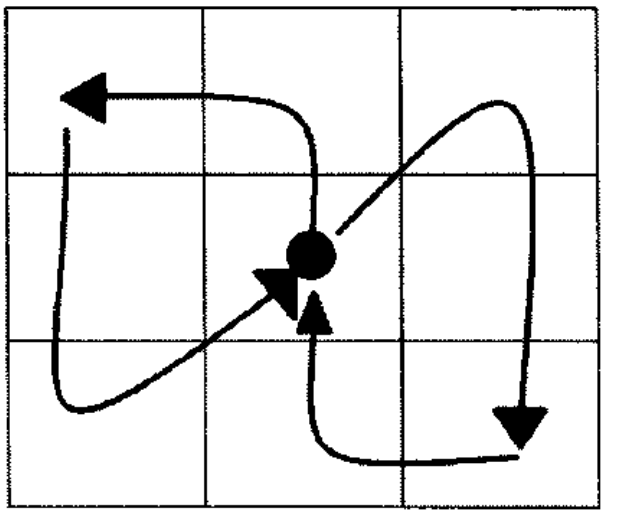
Pacing the Eight Trigrams

Before undertaking this practice, you must be proficient in basic walking methods, hand gestures, and breathing techniques. Also make sure you remember the chants, so you can practice properly.

Stand with both feet stand on the Central Palace, squat down, move the left foot straight forward, and step into the trigram Qian (heaven).

Move the right foot toward the left in an arc and step into the trigram Dui (lake), then move the left foot straight forward and step into the trigram Li (fire). From here, move the right foot toward the left side in an arc and step into the trigram Chen (thunder), then move the left foot straight forward and step into the Central Palace.





Move the right foot straight and to the left and step into the trigram Sun (wind), then move the left foot toward the right side in an arc and step into the trigram Kan (water).

Move the right foot straight and to the right and step into the trigram Gen (mountain), then move the left foot toward in an arc movement and step into the trigram Kun (earth). From here, move the right foot straight forward and step into the Central Palace and from here repeat the cycle.

The basic hand techniques and breathing methods are the same as how those done while pacing the seven stars of the Heavenly Net. Chant:

The eight trigrams of yin and yang support all adepts.
The eight trigrams of yin and yang support my self.

Qian, the prime: glorying in beneficent virtue.
Dui, the marsh: a valiant and heroic soldier.
Li, fire: charging, burning, ever changing.
Zhen, thunder: a shocking, boisterous sound.

The eight trigrams of yin and yang support all adepts,
The eight trigrams of yin and yang support my self.

Xun, the wind: advancing and retreating to benefit all.
Kan, water: rushing about in numerous waves.
Gen, the mountain: never emerging from itself.
Kun, earth: virtue in harmony with the boundless.

The eight trigrams of yin and yang support all adepts.
The eight trigrams of yin and yang support my self.

Preparation: Practice the same as for Pacing the Seven Stars.

Movements: Step with both feet into the Central Palace and silently chant, "The eight trigrams of yin and yang support all adepts. The eight trigrams of yin and yang support my self."

Step the left foot straight forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Qian, the prime: glorying in beneficent virtue."

Step the left foot into the trigram Qian, move the right foot toward the left side in an arc, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Dui, the marsh: a valiant and heroic soldier."

Step the right foot into the trigram Dui, move the left foot straight forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Li, fire: charging, burning, ever changing."

Step the left foot into the trigram Li, move the right foot toward the left side in an arc, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Zhen, thunder: a shocking, boisterous sound."

Step the right foot into the trigram Zhen, move the left foot straight forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "The eight trigrams of yin and yang support all adepts. The eight trigrams of yin and yang support my self."

Step the left foot into the Central Palace, move the right foot straight forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Xun, the wind: advancing and retreating to benefit all."

Step the right foot into the trigram Xun, move the left foot toward the right side in an arc, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Kan, water: rushing about in numerous waves."

Step the left foot into the trigram Kan, move the right foot straight forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Gen, the mountain: never emerging from itself."

Step the right foot into the trigram Gen, move the left foot toward the right side in an arc, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "Kun, earth: virtue in harmony with the boundless."

Step the left foot into the trigram Kun, move the right foot straight forward, open and close both palms in rhythm with your breathing and silently chant: "The eight trigrams of yin and yang support all adepts. The eight trigrams of yin and yang support my self."

Repeat this cycle diligently, so you can attain its mystery and wonder.

Conclusion: When at last you come back to the Central Palace, steady your breathing in a natural pattern. After a short while you can conclude the practice.

Intention Ball Exercises

The intention ball exercises of the eight trigrams used to be named after Master Lü. They involve a variety of training methods, including large and small trigrams, still and active parts, standing and sitting forms, and more. Part of external moving practice, they utilize outer movements to create internal motion. In practice, they resemble taijiquan in that they use the body as the Great Ultimate: the two hands form the north and south poles to create a round space that contains the self, which yet also moves and turns outside this self. There is constant give and take, pushing out and pulling in, moving and resting. When movement reaches it zenith, it generates stillness. In the midst of stillness, the self emerges. It returns to the source and recovers the origin, becoming one with Wuji (Non-Ulitmate), the state before creation. It reaches its ultimate, moves, and generates inner nature, while the true self continues to rest in Wuji.

These exercises can also be used to practice *qi* emission and exchanging life force, involving the fundamental skill to "focus external energies inside and emit internal energies outside," The best place for this is through the eyes. In practice, they form the most sensitive organ or place, functioning like the very eyes of the self. Everyone's sensitive point is different, and so are their eyes. The best place to emit energy outside from the body is through the palms.

Once you have learned to emit an energy ball in a certain direction and visualize it in particular colors, you will see balls radiating in all the five colors—green, red, yellow, white, or black—issuing from the liver, heart, stomach, lungs, and kidneys. The intensity of color depends on your level of cultivation. Typically the color that appears first matches your weakest or sickest organ. For example: if a red color appears first, it indicates a weak or ailing heart. After the red color appears, see if and how it changes. If it turns white, this indicates that the energy is flowing into the lungs; if it turns yellow, it is moving into the stomach. At the same time, this is accompanied by an internal movement. "Intentionally or unintentionally, it appears in the hands; unintentionally or intentionally, it returns through the eyes." Gaining full proficiency in the intention ball exercises, a male can turn one ball into nine; a female can turn one ball into six.

Standing Method

Preparation: Stand relaxed in an open space, meadow, or facing a big tree. Keep the feet about shoulder width apart, let both arms hang naturally on the sides of the body. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. The eyes look level, the heart is at peace, the *qi* is still and the breathing steady.

Movements: Open your eyes and place your hands one up, one down to hold the ball of intention in front of your chest, its diameter about shoulder width. Keep both eyes focused on the center of the ball. Rotate the whole body

from the waist which acts as its axis, the palms facing each other. Rotate them along the ball's surface, thereby turning it in various directions while hugging it in front of your torso. Keep doing this without stopping, moving it forward and back, left and right, up and down. Keep swinging your arms but don't make the movement too big. Keep the waist straight, the top of the head reaching to the Heavenly Net, armpits free. Both feet are at ease, yet holding steady as if set in stone. Bend the knees and squat, contract the abdomen, and lift the anus. Keep the entire body relaxed and breathe naturally.

Intention: Never let the hands leave the ball.

Stepping Method

Based on the standing method of the intention exercises, you can move on stepping practice. The key to this is the sliding step. The practice comes in two forms.

1. Pacing Round Heaven and Square Earth. With both feet, step outside to match the roundness of heaven and walk inside to imitate the square nature of earth. Doing so, you form a stepping pattern matching the directions of the eight trigrams, on the inside imitating the *Hetu*, on the outside echoing the *Luoshu*. At the same time, guide the *qi* along a certain track through the organs in your body.

2. Forming the Taiji Yinyang Fish. With both feet trace the fish-like pattern of the intermingling yin and yang in the Taiji diagram, matching the location of the trigrams. Each time, change direction by 90 degrees, thereby transforming the location of each trigram. At the same time, guide the *qi* along a certain track through the organs in your body.

Level Two Practices

Pacing the seven stars is a method where the postnatal combines with the prenatal, and the human body unites with the heavenly. We already discussed the first level earlier when taking about pore breathing as the principal method. The purpose of the exercise is to realize the oneness of heaven and humanity through the perception of the body. When the body is at one with the heavenly body, there is a matching vibration, which explains some phenomena of human existence and the mystery of the body.

Now we come to the second level of this method. Essentially, it works by breathing through the pores and the inner nature line. It serves to help us understand the relationship between spirit and *qi* and how this applies in the practice. Here spirit comes first, then *qi*. The posture is basically the same as that of the first level, with some subtle differences. The chant, too, is the same.

There are two main breathing techniques that have certain points in common. You inhale to focus *qi* internally and exhale to release it externally, but the flow and path of *qi* are opposite. The first method is: inhale through the

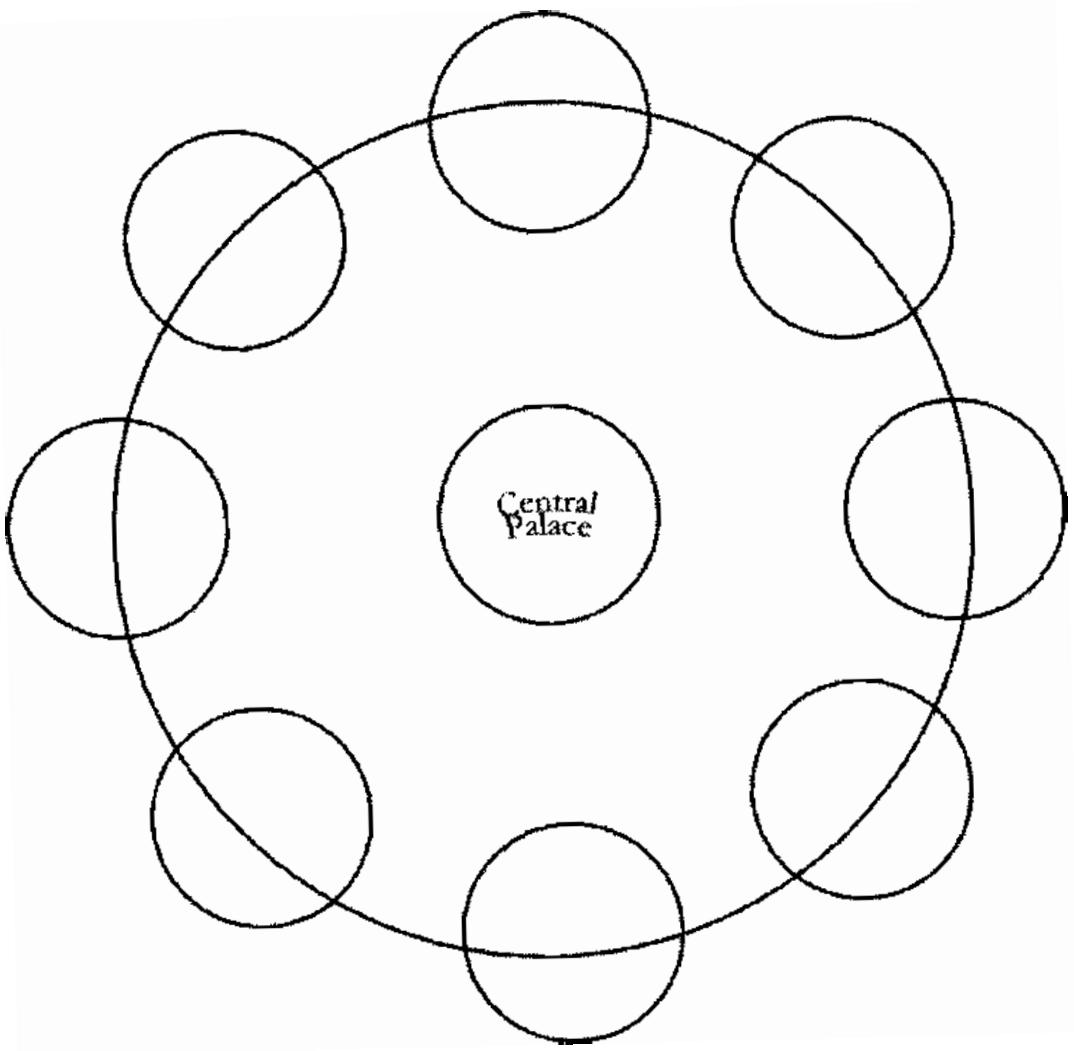
pores of the entire body, then squeeze the *qi* inward; exhale by starting from the lower field, guiding the stem *qi* upward along the broken line, then release it out of the body through the Heavenly Eye.

The second method: Inhale into the body from the Heavenly Eye, letting the *qi* flow down along the broken line to the lower field; exhale and released the *qi* from the entire body through the pores. The flow of *qi* is just the opposite for these two ways of breathing, but they still work with having spirit in front and *qi* behind. There are some subtle differences in movement. As you spread the arms and move forward, the movement is the same, but when you focus internally there is a difference. Here you cross the palms in front of the chest, while at the same time harmonizing the *qi* and flowing it down through the Heavenly Eye point. Keep the lower jaw pulled in slightly and gently push down with the crossed palms.

Note that the two breathing methods cannot be practiced at the same time. You can only practice one at a time and only one type per day. However, you can shift to a different one the next day. If, in the course of practicing you do not wish to go to a particular star position, you can wait in the previous place until that part of the cycle is complete. All other precautions are the same as those for the first level. But note that in this training method spirit is in front and *qi* is behind. Make sure you thoroughly understand the relationship between spirit and *qi*. A good use of this relationship is key.

Another practice on Level Two is Pacing the Nine Palaces. Like Pacing the Seven Stars, it is a way to join the postnatal with the prenatal, the body with the nine palaces. We already discussed the first level, now we describe the second, which is more flexible. The way of breathing is the same as in Pacing the seven stars, Level Two. It, too, divides into two types and spirit is in front and *qi* is behind. Of course, you can inhale and exhale through the pores and move in the same manner as when pacing the seven stars.

Begin at the Central Palace and move either clockwise or counterclockwise—there is no fixed rule. From here, step into any palace and come back to the Central Palace on the fifth step. Whether you step clockwise or anticlockwise, always take four steps, then go back into the position of the Central Palace on step five. From here step in the opposite direction. For example, if you start going clockwise, after the fourth step, turn back into the Central Palace. Then leave the Central Palace and move for four steps counterclockwise to again return to the Central Palace on step five. This completes one cycle of practice. Ideally you move in a figure eight pattern, but you don't have to step along your original path. Rather, you can move into any palace from the Central Palace to begin the next round.


Central
Palace

Chapter Seven

Opening Vessels and Meridians

Within the system of the *Neigong shu*, there are a number of practices involving the five phases, including opening the twelve meridians and conduits externally, opening the eight extraordinary vessels externally, opening them internally, and more. We only introduce one of them here.

Opening the meridians externally through the five phases is also called opening them by expelling the old and absorbing the new. It works by refining yourself, by pushing through the vessels and meridians. Generally, the major meridians are easy to unblock, while the vessels are harder to open. The meridians manifest first, then the vessels appear. Only after the meridians are harmonized, can the vessels manifest. The beginning and end points of the meridians are connected, and their *qi* circulates freely. However, the vessels have no beginning or end. The stem *qi* of the meridians springs from the corresponding five organs and six viscera, whereas the *qi* of vessels comes from the lower field. Therefore, vegetarian adepts who practice internal cultivation can coagulate it in the lower field and use its explosive force and dexterous strength to push through the vessels, making the *qi* flow smoothly. For this, you push not in one big piece, but along a line.

Opening the Vessels utilizes the same hand gestures as energy balancing. Practice standing in stillness, silently circulate the five phases, and harmonize the stem *qi* of the five organs. Moving from the external to the internal, let the intention guide the stem *qi*. Skillfully move it along, pushing, pulling, separating, closing, opening, stretching and more, using various hand techniques to push the internal stem *qi* and guide it through the eight extraordinary vessels. Use your body universe to release a penetrating force to move through the meridians, causing it to transform into stem *qi*. Once this is sufficient, the meridians open. Once they are open, stem *qi* moves around. And once the *qi* moves, you can guide it. As it circulates through the eight extraordinary vessels, it forms its own system within the body universe.

Key characteristics of opening the vessels include a state of mutually supportive stillness and movement plus the dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny. When moving, stretch widely to ensure the energy paths are clear; when still, form your internal universe and wait for perfect breathing to occur. Exter-

nally train the hand techniques for tendons and bones; internally cultivate the movement of stem *qi* through the meridians.

Opening the vessels is highly beneficial for health; it has a therapeutic function for self healing and health care. At the same time, the process involves different forms and skills of exerting force, forming the foundation for external use and the treatment of others.

Opening the vessels externally through the five phases divides into three vehicles. The first vehicle involves using your body universe to eliminate diseases and extend your years. The second vehicle involves using your body universe to align with the outer universe and gain control over life and death. The third vehicle serves to control and heal others. Here we introduce only the first.

1. Beginning Form

Stand still and relaxed, with your feet shoulder-width apart. The arms hang down naturally, palms facing toward the creases of your trousers. Shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands are relaxed. The eyes look straight ahead horizontally, gazing out as far as possible. Gradually retrieve spirit light, focusing it at the edge of your body universe, then guide it to the center of the eyebrows. Close your eyes, touch your touch lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate. Stand still for a while.

External breathing: Inhale and let the natural breath of the universe press into your body pores from all four sides and eight directions; exhale and release the prime energy from the body through all its pores.

Internal breathing: Inhale and guide the perfect breath down past the navel to enter the lower field; exhale and let it rise up, but not beyond the heart.

Perform this breathing preparation 6, 12, or 24 times.

2. Silent Circulation of the Five Phases

The last step of the breathing preparation is to inhale and guide cosmic *qi* into the lower field. As you do so, stack both hands and place them below the navel. Use both hands to push stem *qi* from the lower field into the bladder, pushing the palms down. Keep the hands stacked and the palms positioned slightly down and slanted, exerting penetrating force. After you have pushed the stem *qi* into the bladder, use both hands to stroke the bladder area, imagining them to release something matching the life force to enter the bladder. Check to see what color the bladder is and keep stroking it with your palms. Then raise the stem *qi* from the bladder to enter the liver. From here, keep on moving the *qi* in silent circulation according to the generating cycle of the five phases.

Perform this circulation 6, 12, or 24 times. To conclude, return it to enter the bladder once again. Stack your hands and move them upward to raise the

stem *qi* from the bladder. Inhale as you raise it, then let it revert to the lower field.

3. Working the Paired Vessels

Working the paired vessels means pushing *qi* through the heel and linking vessels. There are a yin and yang heel vessel as well as a yin and yang linking vessel. They move in four lines up from the feet, two each on the yin and yang sides. For preparation and to silently circulate the five phases, close your eyes. When you start to push *qi* through the meridians, gently open your eyes, take either the left or right foot as your center, then turn left or right. The movement is very much like pushing along the paired meridians in energy balancing.

Hold the breath: Continue as described above, with both hands separating, opening, closing, touching, and otherwise moving at the lower field. As you repeatedly close, pull, and open, pay attention to the angle, strength, and penetrating force of your hands. Turn your body to the left and lift up your right foot, or vice versa.

As you exhale, press the tongue against the lower gums and rotate the hands at the lower abdomen. Let the hands separate, open, and close at the lower field on the left and right. Push down on both sides of the thighs, so the four vessels in the thighs move together. Keep pushing down to the toes, paying attention to rotate the body and feet completely; otherwise it will not go. At this point, the left leg squats partially, while the right leg touches the ground.

As you inhale, press the tongue against the upper palate, reach for your toes, and flip both hands. Let both hands curve to raise the *qi* to the top of the head. As your eyes look up, the *qi* pierces the Hundred Meeting point (Baihui). Both hands guide the external *qi* inside, pressing stem *qi* into the lower field. At the same time, move your body forward, your right foot firm, your left foot stepping. During this process, touch the knees and squeeze the crotch, lift the anus and contract the abdomen.

Hold the breath while separating, opening, closing, touching, and otherwise moving both hands at the lower field.

Miniscule movements create the wonder within wonder of this technique. Practice it 6, 12, or 24 times.

4. Opening the Belt Vessel

Push the *qi* of the paired vessels into the lower field, flip your palms to upright, then close, separate, open, push and move it in the lower field. Begin to exhale. As you exhale, press the tongue against the lower gums, open both hands, palms facing out. Push the stem *qi* from the lower field to move along the belt vessel. Keep both hands behind your back, touching the Gate of Destiny. As you inhale, press the tongue against the upper palate, let the hands sep-

arated at the Gate of Destiny, turn the palms so they face the body. Push the *qi* from the Gate of Destiny along its original path to return to the lower field.

Practice this 6, 12, or 24 times.

5. Activating the Penetrating Vessel

As described above, guide the stem *qi* into the lower field.

As you exhale, place the hands on both sides of the body, palms facing up and the fingertips of the left hand pointing at those of the right. With both hands raise the stem *qi* from the lower field (in males, it does not go beyond the nipples; in females, it does not go beyond the sixth rib). As you inhale, flip the hands so the palms face down; let the stem *qi* sink, and focus it in the lower abdomen, then revert it to the lower field.

Practice like this 6, 12, or 24 times.

6. Opening the Upper Paired Vessels

As described above, guide the stem *qi* into the lower field. As you exhale, press the tongue against the lower gums and expel *qi* from the mouth. Place the hands back to back, fingertips pointing down. Both arms hanging lightly, move the hands above your shoulders but keep them below your head. Turn 90 degrees to the left (alternating left and right) without moving your feet. Open your arms and raise them above your head, your eyes following the movement. When your arms are fully straightened, shake both hands, palms facing up. At the same time, raise your head to look up. When turning to the left, the right shoulder should be higher than the left and vice versa.

As you inhale, press the tongue against the upper palate and pull in both hands. Let the ten fingers face each other, palms down. Push the *qi* into the lower field. At the same moment, the body recovers its original state. As you hold the breath, let both hands separate, open, close, touch and otherwise move at the lower field.

Lastly, revert the *qi* into the lower field. Rotating to the left and right is considered one round. Repeat 6, 12, or 24 times.

7. Activating the Conception Vessel

As described above, guide the stem *qi* into the lower field. As you exhale, press the tongue against the lower gums and expel *qi* from the mouth. Place the hands back to back, fingertips pointing down. Both arms hanging lightly, move the hands above your shoulders but keep them below your head. Open your arms and raise them above your head, your eyes following the movement. When your arms are fully straightened, shake both hands, palms facing up. At the same time, raise your head to look up. As you inhale, press the tongue against the upper palate, turn your hands over so, all ten fingers face each other, palms

down. Push the *qi* into the lower field. As you hold the breath, let both hands separate, open, close, touch and otherwise move at the lower field.

Repeat this 6 times. As the hands move up, the stem *qi* reverts to the lower field.

8. Pushing Through the Lower Paired Vessels

As the stem *qi* circulates to the lower field, push it down through the lower paired vessels. The basic requirements are the same as described in Section 3 above. The main difference is, when inhaling *qi,* start to turn right and lift up the left foot.

9. Silent Circulation of the Five Phases

This is the same as described in Section 2 above.

10. Cleansing (Conclusion)

For final cleansing, work with standing in Wuji. Stand naturally and relaxed, breathe through the nose, first exhale and then inhale. Breathing should be natural, use three different kinds of force.

Exhalation: For external breathing, release the *qi* of your body universe from the pores of your entire body into the greater universe. For internal breathing, gather the *qi* of your body universe through the pores of your entire body into the lower field and release it from the lower abdomen.

Inhalation: For external breathing, press the *qi* of the greater universe all four sides and eight directions into your body universe through all the pores of the body. For internal breathing, release the *qi* from the lower field in your body universe by pushing it with some force through all the pores of the body and letting it radiate out, even as the lower abdomen forcefully gathers it inside.

Repeat this process six times, ideally practicing over a minute each. If this is too much, just do what you can. After completing this controlled breathing, revert to natural breathing, stand still and relaxed for a while, then conclude the practice.

Chapter Eight

Standing Practice

Standing practice forms an essential part of the *Neigong shu*. Stand completely still, combining external stillness with internal movement and external movement with internal stillness. Eventually you reach a state of strong external stillness with internal movement. Standing practice divides into nine forms, from Wuji to the nine palaces, leading from easy to complex in an orderly, step-by-step manner. The practice helps to eliminate diseases, strengthen the body, achieve peace and happiness, and prolong life. It can also develop wisdom and potential. Standing comes in three vehicles: The first vehicle is becoming aware of impulse and response. The second vehicle is emitting *qi*. The third vehicle is returning to the source.

It divides into nine techniques of standing, relating to different cosmic entities: Wuji, sun, moon, spring, summer, autumn, winter, seven stars, and nine palaces. Let us begin with the first, Wuji Standing.

1. Step One

Posture: Stand naturally with the feet shoulder-width apart, relax the shoulders so the arms hang easily on the sides, palms facing in. The eyes look straight ahead, the farther the better, all the way to the horizon. Next, gradually gather spirit light and collect it in your internal body universe. Then gently close the eyes, click the teeth and let your tongue touch the upper palate.

Breathing: Beginners should keep the breathing natural until the heart-and-mind are stable and spirit returns fully. Inhale and gather cosmic *qi* from all four sides and eight directions, allowing it to enter through all the pores of the body. Exhale and release cosmic *qi* through the pores to all four sides and eight directions. Breathe like this 24 times, then go back to natural breathing. From here, practice according to your ability and as your schedule allows.

Intention: Retrieve spirit light from the distance into your body universe. Close your eyes, leaving the pupils to look straight ahead. Breathe 24 times as described above, then change to natural breathing. If you only work on standing practice, you can allow your eyes to return to ordinary seeing; there is no need to look into the distance. If you work on energy balancing and when your back is toward the tree while standing, you must keep your eyes closed, leaving the

pupils to look straight ahead. See if there is or isn't a residue of the tree in front of your eyes that emits a band of spirit light toward you. Different kinds of trees emit light of different colors:

Pine	Cedar	Willow	Poplar	Cypress
Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black

2. Step Two

Posture: Same as above.

Breathing: Breathing divides into internal and external aspects. When you inhale externally, allow natural, cosmic *qi* to enter into all the pores of the body. When you inhale internally, let this *qi* move down past the navel and so it enters the lower field. When you exhale externally, see the *qi* from your internal body universe mingle with that of the greater natural universe. When you exhale internally, blow out *qi* but do not let it rise beyond the heart. Do this 24 times, then return to natural breathing.

Intention: After breathing 24 times, close your eyes and look straight ahead into the distance. First, during standing practice let both eyes look down slightly until you can see the lower field, then go back to natural breathing. Second, during energy balancing, when the tree is to your back, again let both eyes look down slightly until you can see the lower field. Then inhale and focus in the lower abdomen, exhale and release it again. When the lower field feels hot like fire, let your intention push the *qi* from the lower field into the bladder as in the silent circulation of the five phases, then follow the same cycle.

Intentionally push the *qi* of the lower field into the bladder, then pull it from there into the liver and gallbladder; lift it from there into the heart and guide it from there into the spleen and stomach; next, raise it into the lungs, push it from there to both the kidneys and lift it up once more to return to the lower field. Thus, with intention and in deep silence, rotate the *qi* along the path of the five phases 6, 12, or 24 times, then return to natural breathing. From here, practice according to your ability and as your schedule allows.

3. Step Three

Posture: Same as above.

Inhalation: To inhale externally: inhale the cosmic *qi* from the natural greater universe, which turns into the shape of a ball and let this press into all the pores of the body. To inhale internally, inhale, then allow the *qi* from all the pores of the body to press into the lower field area while focusing in the lower abdomen.

Exhalation: To exhale externally, release the *qi* from all the pores of the body toward the natural horizon. To exhale internally, release the *qi* from the lower field into all the pores of the body.

Intention: The intention is present everywhere, in all the pores and cells of the body. If practitioners are vegetarian, they may experience tremors in the limbs. In that case, use your hands to palpate along the fourteen meridians in a regular way, until the *qi* returns from there to the lower field.

Wuji standing divides into three steps, to be undertaken in order. You need to complete step one before proceeding to step two and master that before moving on to step three. Best practice under the guidance of a teacher. Palpating along the fourteen meridians in a regular way forms part of step three. Having no teacher may result in spontaneous *qi* movement, which in turn causes irregular palpation of the fourteen meridians, going against the rules of the practice. Regular palpation leads to internal mastery, while irregular palpation causes spontaneous *qi* movement. This is not part of internal mastery; on the contrary, it is harmful to the body and should be carefully avoided.

Effect

Step one of Wuji standing increases strength and improves health. It regulates the body during menopause, both in men and women, and cures any chronic diseases of the organs.

Step two, with its practice of bringing *qi* back into the lower field, then rotating it through the organs in accordance with the five phases, harmonizes internal *qi,* eliminates the hundred diseases and brings about happiness and long life.

Step three enhances subconscious awareness and facilitates the close harmony of spirit, *qi* and intention. Push and move with both hands, palpate along the fourteen meridians in their direction of *qi* flow, performing a practice that the ancients called "forcefully pushing the hundred meridians to open."

Chapter Nine

Sleep Practice

Sleep practice forms an important component of cultivation in the *Neigong shu*. You perform it in a reclining position as if you were sleeping, having the same intention and attitude as in moving forms, that is to make your body completely still while the intention is in motion. The combination of movement and stillness is a good way to calm the nerves and strengthen the body.

Sleep practice is different from ordinary sleep. The two have in common that the body is in a reclined the position, with muscles relaxed and free from fatigue, the brain in stillness yet wakeful. Following conscious guidance, keep both body and brain still while the organs remain in motion. To achieve a good balance between stillness and movement, steady the breath and nurture spirit, allowing you to eliminate diseases and preserve your health. Both white- and blue-collar workers who are stressed at work can use this practice to restore spirit, energy, and strength. Especially the elderly, the infirm, and women can benefit from practicing for a few minutes or even half an hour. Undertaking sleep practice serves to eliminate disease, calm spirit, extend life, and increase longevity. In ancient times, sleep practice was known as sleep immortality practice. It consists of eleven forms, nine of which are presented here:

1. Calming Spirit

Posture: Lying flat on your back in a supine position, adjust the height of the pillow to make your head and neck comfortable. Let the upper limbs be naturally straight, bending the elbow slightly and resting the palms face down at the sides of the body. Stretch the lower limbs comfortably, keeping the feet naturally about shoulder-width apart, the toes turning out to form an image of the Chinese character "eight" /\.

Intention: Let the eyes look straight forward and up for a while, then gradually focus spirit light in the center between the eyebrows. Look at the tip of the nose and from there to the lower abdomen. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate.

Breathing: Breathe long and deep. As you inhale, imagine the *qi* pressing into the lower abdomen from all four sides and eight directions. As you exhale, imagine it shooting out from the lower abdomen through the body pores. In-

tentionally breathe deeply twenty-four times, then let the breath return to its natural rhythm without using active intention.

Note: In the training process, you may feel your whole body swelling or rising. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state. Do not be alarmed.

Therapeutic Effect: Calming spirit has an excellent therapeutic effect on diseases of the nervous system, enhancing mental capacity in white-collar workers and relieving fatigue and boosting vitality in blue-collar workers.

Overall Effect: Calming spirit and nurturing essence wake spirit up and help with recovery from fatigue.

2. Lowering or Steadying Blood Pressure

Posture: Lying flat on your back in a supine position, adjust the height of the pillow to make your head and neck comfortable. Let the upper limbs be naturally straight, bending the elbow slightly and resting the palms face down at the sides of the body. Stretch the lower limbs comfortably, keeping the feet naturally about shoulder-width apart, the heels close to each other and the toes turning out to form an image of the Chinese character "eight" (八).

Intention: Let the eyes look straight forward and up for a while, then gradually focus spirit light in the center between the eyebrows. Look at the tip of the nose and from there to Bubbling Spring on the soles of the feet. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate.

Breathing: Breathe long and deep. As you inhale, imagine the *qi* very slowly rising into the lower abdomen from Bubbling Spring. As you exhale, imagine it sinking from the lower abdomen through both legs and back to Bubbling Spring. Intentionally breathe deeply 24 times, then let the breath return to its natural rhythm without using active intention.

Note: In the training process, you may feel numbness, coldness, swelling, or *qi* flow in the legs. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state. Do not be alarmed.

Therapeutic Effect: The practice is very efficient in steadying the blood pressure.

Overall Effect: It lowers blood levels and regulates blood pressure.

3. Preserving Essence and Enhancing Blood

Posture: Lying flat on your back in a supine position, adjust the height of the pillow to make your head and neck comfortable. Let the elbows rest naturally at the side of the ribs, the right hand over the left, or vice versa, as is comfortable to you. Palms face down and cover the Central Ultimate point (REN3), the third point on the Conception Vessel, where it intersects with the three yin meridians of the legs, about four inches below the naval, on the central line of the abdomen.

Intention: Let the eyes look straight forward and up for a while, then gradually focus spirit light in the center between the eyebrows. Look at the tip of the nose and from there to the area covered by the palms.

Breathing: Breathe long and deep. As you inhale, imagine the *qi* pressing into the Central Ultimate point from all four sides and eight directions. As you exhale, imagine it shooting out from this point into the whole body. Intentionally breathe deeply twenty-four times, then let the breath return to its natural rhythm without using active intention.

Note: In the training process, you may perceive sound traveling through the body, either up or down, especially in the lower abdomen. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state.

Therapeutic Effect: The main effect of preserving essence and enhancing blood is to heal urine inconsistencies, such as involuntary, insufficient, or painful urination.

Overall Effect: The practice steadies and balances the Penetrating, Conception, and Governing Vessels; it also aids in the transformation of *qi* and supports bladder health.

4. Encircling Yang for Better Strength

Posture: Lie down in the same way as for preserving essence and enhancing blood. With both hands cover the Ocean of *Qi* point, the sixth point on the Conception Vessel, located 1.5 inches below the navel on the central line of the abdomen. It rests between the points Passage Prime (Guanyuan; CV4) and Spirit Tower (Shenque; CV8) and is the key place for encircling yang and increasing strength, the place where semen is stored and the eggs are enhanced.

Intention: As in preserving essence and enhancing blood, with your spirit light look directly at the Ocean of *Qi* while covering the area with both palms.

Breathing: Again, as in preserving storing essence and enhancing blood, use the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation to intentionally transform energy in the Ocean of *Qi*.

Note: In the training process, there may be various kinds of noises in the lower abdomen, soft or loud. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state.

Therapeutic Effect: The practice works extremely well in cases of impotence, spermatorrhea, gonorrhea, lower abdominal pain, irregular menstruation and amenorrhea.

Overall Effect: It opens and regulates the Conception Vessel, increases strength by encircling yang, relieves *qi* stagnation and cures kidney deficiency.

5. Replenishing Deficiency by Circulating Yang

Posture: Lie down in the same way as for preserving essence and enhancing blood. With both hands cover Spirit Tower point (REN8), located on the Conception Vessel right at the navel. The navel is in the very center of the ab-

domen. As the ancients said, "The navel in human beings is just like the North Pole in the sky". For this reason, it is also called Heavenly Pivot and Spirit Tower. It is a key point for spirit and *qi,* the root of preserving life. A jewel in replenishing deficiency by circulating yang, the navel connects to all five organs, the main gate through which spirit comes and goes.

Intention and Breathing: Just as in preserving essence and enhancing blood, intentionally transform energy in Spirit Tower.

Note: You may feel movement and sounds in the abdomen. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state.

Therapeutic Effect: The practice works extremely well in cases of yin or yang deficiency, weakness, fatigue, shortness of breath, stress and more.

Overall Effect: Warming yang replenishes deficiencies. Circulating yang to harmonize the center helps digestion and reduces blockages.

6. Steadying *Qi* to Enhance the Heart

Posture: Lie down in the same way as for preserving essence and enhancing blood. With both hands cover the Center Chest point (REN17), located between the nipples, near the fifth sternocostal joint as you count down along the midline of the chest. Part of the Conception Vessel, it is where *qi* gathers and various meridians flow, including the greater yang and lesser yin meridians of the hands and feet.

Intention and Breathing: Just as in preserving essence and enhancing blood, intentionally transform energy in the Chest Center.

Note: You may feel *qi* movement and sounds in the chest. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state.

Therapeutic Effect: The practice works well in cases of chest pain, bronchitis, fullness of the epigastrium and other heart-related conditions.

Overall Effect: It steadies the *qi,* countering its tendency toward sinking or flowing backs. It also broadens the chest and benefits the diaphragm.

7. Protecting the Liver and Clearing the Gallbladder

Posture: Lying flat on your back in a supine position, adjust the height of the pillow to make your head and neck comfortable. Place a cushion, about the same high as the pillow, on the left side of the ribs. Rest your left elbow on the cushion and let the right palm cover the left, or vice versa. The palms should be facing down, covering the upper part of liver and gallbladder on the right.

Intention: Let the eyes look straight forward and up for a while, then gradually focus spirit light in the center between the eyebrows. Move your gaze down to look at the tip of the nose and from there to the area of the liver and gallbladder, imagining their shape. Close your eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate.

Breathing: Breathe long and deep. As you inhale, imagine a major force of *qi* pressing into the liver and gallbladder. As you exhale, imagine the *qi* from the liver and gallbladder exiting through the mouth. At this time, move the tongue from the upper palate to press against the lower gums. Breathe deeply for twenty-four times, then let the breath returns to its natural rhythm without using active intention.

Therapeutic Effect: The practice works very well in cases of chronic hepatitis, liver discomfort, excessive heat of the liver and gallbladder pain. It is also good if the gallbladder area is unwell.

Overall Effect: It structures *qi*-flow to aid the liver and benefit the gallbladder, as well as open the orifices.

Note: You may sense *qi* movements in the liver and/or gallbladder. This is a reaction natural to this qigong state.

8. Enhancing the Spleen and Strengthening the Stomach

Posture: Lying flat on your back in a supine position, adjust the height of the pillow to make your head and neck are comfortable. Place a cushion, about the same high as the pillow, on the right side of the ribs. Rest your right elbow on the cushion and let the left palm cover the right, or vice versa. The palms should be facing down, covering the area of the stomach and spleen on the right.

Intention and Breathing: Just as in protecting the liver and clearing the gallbladder, focus your intention on the area of spleen and stomach.

Therapeutic Effect: The practice is highly efficient in cases of spleen pain, disorders of spleen or stomach, gastritis, stomach pain and poor digestion.

Overall Effect: It brings harmony to the stomach and controls pain; it enhances the spleen and removes swelling.

Note: You may notice *qi* movements in the spleen and stomach area. This is a natural reaction in this qigong state.

9. Peace and Happiness

Posture: Lie down in the same was as in calming spirit, except turn your palms up.

Intention: Let the eyes look straight forward and up for a while, then gradually focus spirit light in the center between the eyebrows. Close your eyes and use spirit light to look at the Jade Pillow point on the back of the head. From here, very slowly move it back to the center between the eyebrows. Close your mouth, touch the teeth lightly together, and press the tongue against the upper palate.

Breathing: Both inhalation and exhalation should be deep, subtle and long. As you inhale, imagine the *qi* from the far reaches of the sky entering coming to the center between the eyebrows. As you exhale, imagine it shooting out from

this area into the far reaches of the cosmos. Intentionally breathe deeply twenty-four times, then let the breath return to its natural rhythm, imagining a magnificent scenery in outer space.

Note: In the training process, you may notice electromagnetic waves of external beings that shake your entire body. There may also be some visions of beautiful scenery. Do not be alarmed. They signal positive changes in your body due to practice.

Summary

These nine forms of sleep practice serve to regulate and open the Conception Vessel. They all relate to each other in certain ways, each focusing more or less on regulating *qi*-flow, blood, essence, spirit and the five organs. But they also support each other, following an approximate order to enhance mutual complementation. Ultimately, they serve to steady and enhance *qi,* blood, yin and yang in the body, thereby preserving health and eliminating diseases.

To calm spirit, lower the blood pressure.
To lower the blood pressure, preserve essence.
To preserve essence, encircle yang.
To encircle yang, replenish deficiencies.
To replenish deficiencies, steady the *qi* flow.
To steady the *qi* flow, protect the liver.
To protect the liver, enhance the spleen.
Once in this manner the body is in harmony and balance,
Attain peace and happiness.

Sleep practice is so called because it is done in a reclining posture that matches the sleep position. While the body is still, the intention is in motion, eventually leading to the mutual support of stillness and movement. Zhang Guolao while riding his donkey typically entered a state of sleep mentation, which means he was doing sleep practice.

After doing sleep practice correctly for a while, the heavenly circuit may emerge and you can see the eight lines of the meridians, matching their description in the *Qingjing jing.* Sleep practices can unblock the various channels as well as all the yin and yang meridians besides regulating the Conception and Governing Vessels. It serves three major purposes, first, to attain health and long life; second, to circulate the life force, thereby to enhance the internal movements in practitioners and also affects those around them; and third, to control others: affecting oneself in various ways and impacting those nearby, as well as submitting others to personal control.

For these reasons, sleep practice is a rather high-level method of cultivation. Practice for one month continuously and throughout your body different

phenomena may manifest, such as the sense that your head or legs aren't there anymore! Sometimes you may have experiences like seeing the skull of other people. These are good signs. Do not be alarmed. Just observe it for a while. Sometimes you may see visions of children and other scenes, this signals a return to infancy, a memory of what is inside, usually associated with the second stage of practice. Just keep your eyes gazing straight ahead. Another vision that may occur is of ancient battlefields. Someone from the Beijing class, for example, has met the Qianlong and Kangxi emperors, visited their palaces as well as their six favorite places and eight great sights. Keep on practicing continuously as long as you have visions of good scenes, then make a record of what you see and report it to your teacher or his assistants. It is quite common that the sights really exist. Every time I arrive at a new location, the first thing I do is perform sleep practice in order to see what is going on there.

Ideally you practice once or twice a day, right around noon, but no longer than an hour and picking a different form each day. If you do it as part of longevity training for the elderly, you can do sleep practice at any time. Always start with sitting meditation as a preparation and make sure you do not fall asleep. It is fine to sleep after you conclude the practice. Also, it may happen that spirit starts to wander off away from the body during sleep practice. In that case, make sure to keep a tight hold on it and do not allow it to rise up and wander off. If it happens that the body moves, there is no need for alarm. It is just that the yang meridian on the back is subjected to pressure from the body—the only line not affected is the yang meridian of the hand. Allow the body to move naturally, but do not let it stand up. The feet can move a bit, but they should not lift off. However, pay attention to never move the hands even if the whole body is in pain and the joints are aching.

If you feel discomfort anywhere, adjust the position of that part to have good posture. If it feels that your hands or feet are not there, that is a good sign. Ideally you stop feeling your entire body. If it feels as if the upper and lower parts are not there and only the middle section is still around, then there is something wrong with it. Allow your muscles to relax and your brain be still as you do the practice. If you're just starting out and feel as if the *qi* is very full, do not worry. Nor is there reason for concern if the palms after practice are full of sticky juice. We call this floating bubbles.

The 4th form, encircling yang for better strength, is most helpful to treat irregular menstruation and dysmenorrhea. Practice regularly for seven to eight days before your cycle is scheduled: it will happen and be free of pain.

Chapter Ten

Capturing Solar Essence and Lunar Florescence

Capturing solar essence and lunar florescence is a Daoist method of cultivating perfection that forms part of "heaven and humanity becoming one." Focus on the sun and moon as objects, then use a series of complete and detailed methods: selecting and refining, circulating and transforming, protecting and priming, warming and nourishing, as well as returning to the origin. Doing so, you capture the prenatal potency of solar essence and lunar florescence and use them to repair the primordial stem *qi* in your postnatal body. Also, you use your body universe to interact with the heavenly universe, combining and uniting the two and thus forming a radiant sun and bright moon within and entering the great vehicle state of "humanity united with the sun and moon."

The practice serves to cultivate the three dimensions of time, space, and universe. In ancient times, it was also called absorbing solar and lunar *qi*. It divides into three vehicles and three forms.

The standing form is the lesser vehicle. It serves to steady yin and yang within the body as well as to repair and supplement primordial stem *qi*.

The moving form is the middle vehicle. It serves to harmonize yin and yang both within and outside the body, so they both apply themselves toward goodness.

The seated form is the great vehicle. It serves to contrast yin and yang both within and outside the body, to allow self-defense and control over others.

Start by standing, then move, and finally sit in stillness. You can work either inside or outdoors.

The moon rotates around the earth and completes its cycle in one month. The earth rotates around the sun and completes its cycle in one year. One year has twelve months; one month has 30 days. One is counted through earthly branches, the other through heavenly stems. All this is first documented in the *Qimen dunjia*.

Absorbing solar and lunar *qi* and integrating it into the lungs or liver is described in the second paragraph of the first section as a process to be undertaken during the heavenly circuit as it passes through the *mao* (5-7 a.m.) and *you* hours (5-7 p.m.). You will feel the liver and lungs generate a pathway and notice changes in the energetic transformations between the lungs and the kidneys.

The lungs are seat of the material soul, while the liver and gallbladder house the spirit soul. When they combine, they shine forth brightly.

Absorbing Lunar Florescence

Absorbing lunar florescence or vital energy (*qi*) is a cultivation practice developed by ancient Daoist patriarchs that pairs the body universe with the moon. It begins with the moon being brought into the body. The body attracts, matches, repels, opposes, and exchanges the life force of the moon. It shoots, radiates, and projects it. Seen as a heavenly body, the moon does not shine by itself and was accordingly linked with the trigram Kun in the old days. However, it also reflects the rays of the sun and accordingly matches the postnatal trigram Kan, which is yang within yin. The Kan trigram connects to water; its nature is yin. Seen in terms of the body, in its universe, the liver connects to yang; its opening is the eyes, which similarly are yang.

Taking this one step further, when the eyes are open, they are yang; when closed, they are yin. Open your eyes and shoot your vision toward the moon; then close them and again shoot your vision toward the moon. When both eyes emit a ray this corresponds to yang within yin. Among trigrams, this matches Li (water). Therefore, when your body's yang within yin and the moon's yin within yang enter a dynamic of mutual exchange, the result is a state of convergence of yin and yang, the natural external intersection of Kan and Li. As practitioners vigorously capture the moon's yin within yang and enter this into their body, they match it with the yang position in the body. Over a long time, the body universe will come to contain a bright moon that orbits around it. Thus we speak of capturing lunar florescence and integrating it into the self.

The liver corresponds to the eyes among the organs; among trigrams it occupy the position of yang. The straight ray of light from the eyes to the moon matches the trigram Qian, which also holds the position of yang. When you absorb lunar *qi* and establish a mutual harmony of yin and yang, you take in the moon's yin within yang. The moon we take in this way belongs to yin, but in the brain there is a light which is yang. At this time, yin within yang enters the body, but it cannot enter the liver, as the liver belongs to yang. Two yang lines cannot combine, so the trigram has to lose a yang line to return to the yin position. The first yin position is the lungs. Yang from outside enters the yang position through yin, forming part of the process of heaven and humanity becoming one.

Fundamentally, the moon passes through several phases: full moon and new moon, plus waxing and waning half moon. Correspondingly, there are four methods to take in lunar *qi*. At full moon, you practice by attaching the trigram Qian (heaven) to Kun (earth). At new moon, you practice by attaching the trigram Kun to Qian. During the 7th and 8th days of the lunar cycle, you practice

internal cleansing, exhaling and inhaling with no particular intention. During the 22nd and 23rd days, you inhale with intention and exhale with no intention: this is called cleansing during *mao* and *you*, a practice still performed today.

Full moon means practicing on the 14th, 15th and 16th days of the lunar calendar. This is the best time to absorb lunar *qi*. On these days, the prime time is from 10 to 12 p.m., ancient times called the *zi* hour: "Achievement comes during *zi*." In other words, this is the optimal time to practice. For beginners, it is best to start the practice right after the moon rises; however, do not work when clouds cover the moon or on foggy days.

The preferred location of practice is outside in nature: on top of a mountain, in the woods, on a meadow, in a park, on the shores of a river, lake, or the ocean. However, the practice is different when done on the beach or while standing on rocks.

1. Preparation

During the 14th, 15th and 16th days of the lunar calendar, stand naturally and face the moon, both arms relaxed by your side. Assume the Wuji position, palms open toward the moon. Wait for the body to become still, the breath even, and the mind settled. Then emit a shape from the eyes, following a certain trajectory to release your life force toward the moon. Do this for a while. Thoroughly memorize the shape and outline of the moon as well as the contrast between light and shade, then gradually retrieve your vision. Take in the concrete spirit light and bring it into your body universe.

Close your eyes and focus the moon in your body universe. Deep in your heart, silently contemplate the imagined shape of the moon, making sure it is round, full, and without gaps. At this moment, the moon is in front of you as well as in your body and at the edge of your body universe. In other words, as you look at the moon, it comes closer and leaves an image in your eyes and brain. People's thoughts are very fast; in ancient times, they were deemed faster than wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. From here, follow the next four steps to take in lunar *qi*.

2. Using Martial Fire to Collect and Refine It: Ways of Absorbing and Emitting

Once you have done this preparation, the moon is already in your body universe. By absorbing and emitting, you next match it with the moon in the heavenly universe. The first step is to exhale, then inhale. As you exhale, use the internal force of your body universe to emit moonlight from the center of the heart. Emit it like an immortal ascending to the moon. Return it to its prenatal source position, thereby causing a moon to take shape in the body: it is without substance but matches the prenatal bright moon.

As you inhale, use the internal force of your body universe to absorb the bright moon. From the triangular area of the eyes inhale it into the body, then swallow the moon like a tiger pouncing on its prey and enter it into both lungs. At this time, the bright moon enters the body and transforms into stem *qi*. It divides into three vehicles when entering the lungs. The first vehicle is stem *qi* entering both lungs; the second vehicle is stem *qi* pouring into both lungs; the third vehicle is stem *qi* filling up both lungs. Once complete, we speak of the moon filling the metal chamber [of the lungs]. It appears as a big circle of light in the body.

Breathing should be soft, even, and long. Be sure to make good use of the internal force. When exhaling, press the tongue against the lower gums; when inhaling, press it against the upper palate. First breathe in and out through the nose; later breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. One inhalation and one exhalation count as one breath: you need to do 24. While breathing, always maintain positive thinking, following the pattern of mentation, intention, and direction (lit., "force"), to wit, mentation happens before intention takes shape, it is just basic thinking; intention arises when there is a directed thought ready to emerge, but it has not yet emerged and is waiting to do so; and direction means that a thought has emerged.

"Absorbing and emitting the bright moon, martial fire emerges; rapidly circulating and swiftly transforming, memories imprint on the heart." After lunar essence and stem *qi* are integrated into the lungs, immediately practice circulating and transforming [the five phases], since they may contain various other forms of *qi,* such as water, wood, fire, earth, and the like. By silently circulating the five phases, you get them all to recover their original positions.

Note: First absorb, then emit, because at this time the moon is already in your body universe. Make sure to return it first to its original location.

3. Moving Civil and Martial Fire: Circulating through the Five Phases

Once you have absorbed and emitted the bright moon 24 times, inhale and guide the moon light into the metal chamber of the lungs. After the *qi* fills them, rotate your hands so the palms face each other. Let the arms hang naturally by the sides of the legs and your breathing become natural. Now, silently circulate the five phases. (Beginners can use their hands to move the *qi* along.) Move in the direction of the generating cycle, from metal through water, wood, and fire to earth. Starting with the lungs, after circulating and transforming *qi* in them, follow along the ribs on both sides to press it into the kidneys, then move forward into the bladder. From the bladder raise the *qi* into the liver, then raise it into the heart. From here press it down into the stomach and spleen and again move it into the lungs. Repeat the practice to circulate all five phases. Perform it six times, ending with the lungs. When circulating the five phases, pay attention to the changes of the five colors in the organs.

When circulating the five phases, a little person may appear in front of you. In ancient times, this was called the guard. His appearance means that you need to reverse the cycle. People of high achievement can control his movements.

4. Protecting the Prime with Civil and Martial Fire: Deep Breathing to Revert It to Its Original Position

After you have completed the silent circulation of the five phases and have returned the *qi* to the metal chamber, use martial fire to lead civil fire in protecting the prime.

Take the same posture as during preparation. Close your eyes and internally observe your body universe. Let the arms relax, hanging by the outer thighs, palms facing each other. Coordinate your breathing and use your inner power to regulate the internal stem *qi*.

As you exhale, push the white stem *qi* of the lungs into all the pores of the body, so the stem *qi* spreads out. Fill the body universe and do not allow anything to leave. As you inhale, focus body, organism, and universe, then use the power of white stem *qi* to wash both lungs. Breathing should be soft, even, and long. Repeat six times.

The purpose of returning it to its original position and protecting the prime is to make sure you have incorporated the essence of the five phases from the prenatal universe into the five organs of your body universe, and bring the essence and florescence of the bright moon into the metal chamber. When a light appears in your body universe that surrounds you also on the outside, you have been successful. At this moment, you have a bright moon in your universe, which you can easily move outside the body. Its direction of motion matches the small heavenly circuit. The state of success is described by Master Lü, "Perfection means that essence and *qi* fill the metal chamber without a shred of false material."

5. Using Civil Fire to Cleanse: Warming and Nourishing

After returning it to its original position and protecting the prime, stand easy and relaxed, your feet naturally about shoulder-width apart. Close your eyes and keep looking straight ahead. Breathe naturally, completely free from thoughts and without any intentions. Obscure your gaze and look into your body to see your body universe, checking whether it issues a light. Circulate the *qi* in a natural way, silently imagining that the moon is orbiting through your body universe. The moon is located in your body universe and your body universe is located in the greater heavenly universe. After a while look again to see whether a bright spot is circulating. If so, remember its path and see how big the bright moon is, how big the bright spot is, how bright and what color. Make sure to look carefully.

As you think about it repeatedly, allow it to emerge and see whether it leaves your body universe. As the bright spot rotates, feel if your body is hot. If it has started to circulate naturally, you can silently imagine that the moon orbits your body universe and remember its path.

Over a long time of practice, a bright moon will naturally appear in your body universe, moving regularly in the direction of the small heavenly circuit. At this moment, your body universe is fully centered in the heavenly universe. The earth becomes small, almost as if you could hold or drop it. The moon revolves around you and you feel as if you are in another world, where everything is always in perfect beauty. When the *Qimen dunjia* and the *Wanfa guizong* speak about the orbits of the sun and moon and the circulation of the trigrams Qian and Kun, this is what they are talking about.

Stand still and nurture your heart with internal cleansing. Your outer body does not move, but you internally observe whether a light issues forth and expands. Carefully examine the path, size, brightness and color of the stem *qi* circulating within. Let your eyes look straight ahead, watching the moon in the body universe rotating around the Conception and Governing Vessels. You can practice cleansing for a long or short period. There is no time limit, just follow your inclination.

Effect: The practice strengthens the body and increases health; it provides treatment for nephritis, diabetes, lung disease, and more.

6. Recovering the Source

The practice of recovering the source is a form of conclusion. You move the bright moon in your body universe back to the spot between the eyebrows, pervading the triangular area between this and the two eyes. From here, you send the bright moon back to its original position in the prenatal universe, a method called "shoot the moon back to the origin". In ancient times, it was also known as "the immortal ascends to the moon". Should the bright inner moon refuse to shift and is stuck in the body, strongly concentrate your spirit to shoot it off and send it from your body universe back to its original place.

To conclude, use the triangular area around your eyes to send off the moon.

Explanation

The above six steps present the complete system of standing lunar *qi* absorption. The first step is mainly to wait for a bright moon to start orbiting in your body universe. At this moment, make sure the toes grip the ground and your body turns into a certain angle.

Collecting the martial fire twenty-four times means that you transit from cosmic *qi* to stem *qi*. Silently circulating the energy of the five phases six times means that you transform the stem *qi* in your body. Once this is done, it re-

turns to its original position and you can release the stem *qi* to form a radiant halo around your body. Cleansing, next, again supports the transition of stem *qi.* This is the general rule of capturing and using of three kinds of *qi.* As the instructions go, "Concentrate spirit and gather *qi,* unite the three *qi* into one. The universe always turns. Ascend to the moon and observe its course."

When silently circulating the five phases, if you have enough internal force, you can push it along without using your hands. Where the intention goes, the stem *qi* goes, circulating automatically. This is mainly to prepare for the start of the *mao* (5-7a.m.) and *you* (5-7p.m.) heavenly circuit and to transform the *qi* that is coming in. After completing the circulation the five phases, a Taiji ball will appear in your body, not flat but three-dimensional. It contains the two fish eyes of the Taiji symbol, also called the two pivotal mechanisms, one yin and one yang. These two points are also known as the sun and moon in the body.

It is good to extend the cleansing time a bit longer and wait for the bright moon to orbit in your body. For this, use a fixed number of breaths, ideally a multiple of six, that is, practice 6, 12, 24, 108, or even over 200 times.

When practicing at night, make sure to prevent possible interference from other people and animals. Even small animal, such as rabbits, mice, weasels, foxes and so on can emit vibrational waves. At full moon, they may well come out around 9 p.m. and carry away all the lunar *qi.* They do so, because at this time the influence of the earth on them is diminished (relatively speaking). What attracts them most strongly is the yin within yang of the moon.

When working with this kind of practice, especially in the woods, it is possible that your entire body starts to emit a scent. Do not dismiss it, even if it is—as typically happens—a smell arising from urine and sweat but accept it gladly.

When absorbing lunar *qi,* do not start by facing the moon. Your body will automatically turn and eventually it turns to the moon for a maximum difference of five degrees. Also, never have your back toward the moon. It is all right to face the moon for ten or twenty minutes, then turn your body away, or sit in a car for a while. At the end, however, turn your body toward the moon once more. Be sure to keep your eyes closed as you turn.

When absorbing lunar *qi,* you do not follow the path of the moon. You are in charge, so let the moon revolve around you. The process of absorbing lunar *qi* is the transformation of cosmic *qi* into stem *qi.* What you capture is a portion of the lunar trigram Kan. Your whole body needs to become a sphere, so that when you swallow the moon and bring it into the lungs, it is full. As you attain a high level of expertise in this practice, even if the moon sets, the bright moon of your body universe still orbits around it. During all other hours of practice, form a full moon as you guide the moon into your lungs and see a *qi* pillar arising there. This is called: the moon fills the metal chamber.

The moon you take in is yin, however, it is still radiating in your head and the light of this light is yang. From here yang within yin enters your body and there is another relationship between its flow and the liver. The liver is yang and two yang cannot unite. This means they are misplaced, so where do they belong? This you need to find out for yourself. The first position yin returns to is the lungs: yin passes through yang and again enters into yin. This signifies a minor level of heaven and humanity becoming one. Here cosmic *qi* turns into stem *qi,* you inhale yin and it transforms into yang.

During standing and cleansing practices, you may feel that something is moving in your body universe. In that case, carefully check whether the body produces a light. Is bright? How big is it? What kind of path does it follow? Can it exit from the body? Examine it carefully and see it clearly.

Absorbing Solar Essence

Receiving solar essence or vital energy is a cultivation practice developed by ancient Daoist patriarchs that pairs the body universe with the sun. It begins with the sun being brought into the body. The body attracts, matches, repels, opposes, and exchanges the life force of the sun. Your body shoots, radiates and emits life force toward the sun. From the heavenly point of view, the sun is like the trigram Qian, but the sun is not merely fire: after it ignites something remains. This is a sunspot, yin within yang, matching the postnatal position of the trigram Li.

In terms of the body, its surface is yang and its inside is yin. The latter also includes the liver. Among the five organs and six viscera, the liver is affiliated with the yang position, that is, yang within yin, matching the postnatal position of the trigram Kan. As you open your eyes and inhale the yin *qi* of the sun and integrate it into the liver, you create a good match between Kan and Li, leading to a situation where yin and yang are compatible. Over time, in your body universe, a radiant sun will form and start to orbit. This, therefore, is known as capturing solar essence and circulating it through the body.

Opening your eyes to take in solar *qi* prevents the yin *qi* of the trigram Kun from entering the lungs. As you inhale, let it first enter deep into the lungs, so it can begin to transform. The postnatal trigram position of the sun is the trigram Li, because not all the *qi* you breathe in is pure yang. There is also some yin *qi* in it and equally there is yin *qi* in the trigram Li. Opening the eyes is likened to light, light is yang. When you breathe in this yin *qi* it should be returned to the liver. If you practice capturing essence during sunset, it returns to the place of metal and wood. Pure solar *qi* first enters the lungs and liver, thereby capturing yang within yin. In this case, metal does not move, but wood rises, working according to the controlling cycle.

The sun appears in different forms, during sunrise, zenith, sunset, and behind clouds. Correspondingly, there are four training methods to take in solar *qi*. Here, we only present how to work with the sunrise, a practice originally known as honoring the early morning sun.

The practice begins with standing, preferably in nature: mountain forest, grassland, river bank, or lakeside. The best location is near a cave. Practice time is every day from the time the sun emerges on the horizon until it is about to break above it. That is, you begin to take in *qi* just before the sun emerges at the horizon and you stop when it has fully risen. Do not practice when the sky is cloudy.

1. Preparation:

Pick a suitable place, such as a mountain, where the sunrise can be observed. Stand naturally in the direction the sun will rise, letting both arms hang naturally, palms facing the sun. Close your eyes and imagine the sun for a moment. Steady body, breath, and heart-and-mind by becoming deeply relaxed and still inside. Heart and breath should match each other. When your intention and breathing are in rhythm, slightly open your eyes and silently wait for the sunrise.

2. Using Martial Fire to Collect and Refine it: Ways of Absorbing

Start the practice as soon as the sun has just peeked above the horizon. Keep both eyes round and shoot their light at the sun. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, while using your internal force to strongly absorb solar *qi* and essence.

As you exhale, press the tongue against the lower gums and emit the stem *qi* of liver and gallbladder through all the pores of the body. Doing so, your body becomes a red fireball. It the old days, people called this the self-destructive way of absorbing *qi*. The red sun does not leave the body, but makes the entire body red throughout.

As you inhale, press the tongue against the upper palate and use your intention to imagine a red sun in the east, bright like fire, a dragon that seems to breathe into your liver and gallbladder. Thus cosmic *qi* enters your body universe and transforms into stem *qi*. The first step is to see heavenly fire entering the wood container. The second step is to see the heavenly fire pouring into the two wood areas. The liver and gallbladder become one and are both red. The third step is to see the wood chamber full of fire. After completing these three steps, heavenly fire fills up the entire wood area, making the liver and gallbladder strongly red.

Breathing should be soft, even, subtle and long. One exhalation and one inhalation make one round and ideally you take two minutes per round. Do this as slowly as possible. If done quickly, your body will start to slant forward.

When absorbing *qi* at sunrise, be aware that the practice is different depending on the seasons. You practice more frequently in the summer and less often in the winter. You usually have time to do three rounds until the sun has risen, six rounds at the most. As soon as the sun has risen above the horizon, you stop absorbing and start transforming. This is because, after the sun has risen, yang rises and yin diminishes and yang *qi* is everywhere. If you continue to capture the *qi,* you will harm your eyes.

Breathe consistently in through the nose and out through the mouth. As you inhale, press the tongue against the upper palate; as you exhale, press the tongue against the lower gums, both palms facing the sun. Since the palms are yin, this places yin against yang. As you inhale, use the intention to imagine the red sun as a flying dragon in the east entering the area of your liver and gallbladder. Retrieve and reclaim it with your eyes. As you exhale, use the intention to imagine the stem *qi* of the liver and gallbladder filling up the entire body. The pores expand, the larger the better. At this time, your eyes stay motionless: do not blink.

As soon as the sun is about to fully rise above the horizon, close your eyes. If you close them after the sun has gone above the horizon, it will be too late: you will not catch it and your connection will be broken. If you want to close your eyes before the line is broken, you have to close them early, even if you do not breathe. Once you have closed your eyes, immediately turn both hands so the palms face each other.

3. Using Civil and Martial Fire While Silently Circulating the Five Phases: Return to Original Position

The *Yìjīng* says: "As the sun rises in the east, yang rises and yin diminishes". As soon as the sun rises above the horizon, when yang rises and yin diminishes, you need to return it to its original position. At this time, you can no longer capture the yin stem *qi* of prenatal solar essence and your eyes must no longer emit light toward the sun. In other words, you can no longer obtain solar essence and looking at it any longer will hurt your eyes. Thus, close your eyes immediately, focus your heart and place your palms on the legs. Breathe naturally, pressing the tongue against the upper palate and silently circulate the five phases in the productive cycle. Start from the positions of liver and gallbladder and work along the following path: liver – heart – stomach – lungs – kidneys – bladder, thereby eventually returning to the liver. While you do so, press the tongue against the upper palate and coordinate your breathing six times. Following the mother-child order of the phases, make good use of inhaling and exhaling stem *qi*. Inhaling stem *qi* means the mother sends it to the child; exhaling stem *qi* means the child receives the mother's love.

4. Martial Fire Leads Civil Fire to Return to Original Positions and Protect the Prime

After silently circulating the five phases, the stem *qi* returns to the wood chamber. You then use martial fire to lead civil fire, so that it, too, can return it to its original position and protect the prime.

Your posture is the same as during preparation. Close your eyes and look into our body universe, the arms hanging next to the outer thighs and the palms facing each other. Coordinate your breathing and use internal power to regulate internal stem *qi*.

As you exhale, push the green stem *qi* of liver and gallbladder into the body pores so it can be widely distributed. Fill the entire body with red color, then let green stem *qi* drip into it (so that the inside is green while the outside is red). Never let the green stem *qi* rush out of your body universe. As you inhale, focus body, form and universe. Return the green stem *qi* to the position of the liver and gall bladder, letting fire burn in the wood chamber.

Breathe six times, consistently soft, even, subtle and long. When the body universe appears to be hot or burning and a light emerges from it, the practice is considered successful. At this moment, you feel as if your body is on fire. Pay close attention to this step and make sure to use "long" breaths. If the breath is short, you won't be able to stand it.

After circulating through the five phases, when the energy arrives in the liver, immediately inhale and focus strongly on the inside of the body. Move in from the pores and focus ever deeper, integrating the energy into the liver. As you exhale, release it again from the liver, however, do not let it move beyond the pores.

5. Civil Fire Leads Martial Fire to Warm Nurturing and cleansing

After completing the previous cycle, stand naturally and relaxed, feet about shoulder-width apart. With the eyes closed, look straight ahead. Breathe naturally and keep free from thinking and intention. Stand still, silently envisioning your body as a ball of fire, with the blood on fire. Close your eyes and look into your body universe, seeing it as a ball of fire. At this moment, someone looking at you will see you surrounded by a bright light. You look as if enveloped by mist or surrounded by clouds, natural and unrestrained. You can cleanse like this for a long or short time, as you please. However, do not exceed one hour. When warmly nurturing and cleansing, breathing and intention should be natural. Again, do not breathe with intention.

6. Recovering the Source

The practice of recovering the source is a form of conclusion. You bring the red sun of your body universe back to the spot between the eyebrows, allowing it to pervade the triangular area between this spot and the eyes. From

here, you send the sun back to the prenatal universe with internal force. In the old days, this was known as "the immortal embraces the sun". Send the sun to the prenatal universe, but do it only once since this marks the conclusion of the practice. After cleansing, your body may want to get up, but do not let it. Rather, close your eyes and send the sun back to its original position through the triangular area, delivering it back to the position of the trigram Li.

Explanation

The methods of absorbing solar and lunar *qi* are basically the same, consisting of six steps: preparation, collecting and refining, orbiting and transforming, protecting the prime, warmly nurturing and recovering the source. The entire process moves from cosmic *qi* to stem *qi* and back to cosmic *qi*. You exhale first, then inhale: you cannot do it in reverse order. It is important to connect one cycle to the next, to keep intention and *qi* in harmony and unbroken. However, the two methods also have differences. Absorbing lunar *qi* is a method of absorbing and emitting, actions undertaken especially when collecting and refining. Absorbing solar *qi* is a method of absorbing and taking in. During collection, you absorb it into the body but do not emit it again.

Silently circulating the energy of the five phases is basically the same for both, although the action that starts the practice is different as well as its purpose. Absorbing lunar *qi* serves to train the lungs; after practicing for a certain time, something like a cloud or mist appears in them. This mist has a shape but no substance; it is irregular. When white *qi* fills up the metal chamber, its shape is like a tiger, so it is called the "white tiger". This is refining the material soul. Absorbing solar *qi* is for liver and gallbladder. When green *qi* fills up the wood chamber, you feel as if there is a dragon moving back and forth, therefore it is known as the "green dragon." It serves to refine the spirit soul. As the saying goes, "Refining metal and wood, an interior sun and moon emerge. They combine, and spirit and material souls come forth."

Either before or after absorbing solar *qi,* also spend some time practicing the exchanging *qi* with nature. Doing so, you will feel as floating gently, soaring into the clouds and riding the mist. Absorbing solar *qi* regulates the blood flow in the body and has therapeutic effects on hypertension and coronary heart disease. In addition, the practice can benefit people with liver disease. Absorbing lunar *qi* can take up to two hours, whereas absorbing solar *qi* takes only about three minutes. Do it persistently and on time and your face will soon turn from black to white and from yellow to red. White touched with red or red touched with white—that is like children's skin. Your face will be pink in color; older people will find their colored spots disappear.

Absorbing lunar and solar *qi,* attracting immortality, energy balancing practices, pole standing and opening the vessels externally through the five

phases, strictly speaking do not evoke the same feelings. After experiencing all five methods, you are qualified to talk about the *qi* of chaos prime.

When absorbing lunar and solar *qi,* you may feel that something is guiding you. If that happens, do not move or talk, but wait for the body to move internally and the guiding agent will leave on his own. Such figure have no place in the universe, but wander about everywhere. You are now more sensitive, a king of your realm and no longer controlled by the outside world. Absorbing solar *qi* means absorbing on a large scale. Absorbing lunar *qi* means using the body mechanism to receive the *qi.* It is a superb method, indeed.

When protecting the prime and returning it to its original position, the stem *qi* in the body starts to transform and the body begins to emit a light. When warmly nurturing and moving the stem *qi* to each phase in its position, a light will illuminate the entire body from the inside. This can be seen by outsiders, a fact that often leads to misunderstandings. The problem is whether it comes from the person or from heaven. Light emitted from a person is immovable, but that from heaven can move. The impression taken by a camera is the essence and florescence of the person and when people look at the picture, they know it is yours. If the camera is good, even the organs can be photographed. Therefore, it important to take few pictures. Absorbing lunar *qi* is like absorbing the essence and florescence of the moon.

As the sun rises, suddenly it appears as a fierce redness on the horizon and all across the sky yang rises and yin diminishes, the starry constellations have disappeared. If you capture solar *qi* again at this point, your eyes will be injured. Solar essence and lunar florescence are a type of energy that has both shape and substance. They can exist in the body.

Chapter Eleven

Attaining Wisdom and Potential

Attaining wisdom and potential forms another important part of the *Neigong shu*. It lays the foundation for Daoist chants while also serving as an introductory method of the Complete Perfection school. The practices go back to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, written by Patriarch Lü. They center on refining spirit and the life force, presenting a unique cultivation system of repairing inner nature within the overall Daoist system of dual cultivation, both inner nature and life-destiny. The system was created by Lü Dongbin, the Perfected of Pure Yang. The system divides into three vehicles and nine steps:

Three steps of the lesser vehicle: Returning to infancy and recovering memories, clearly discriminating true and false, polishing spirit wisdom to a bright sparkle.

Three steps of the middle vehicle: Knowing one's future, ceasing eating to pursue life, changing old for new clothes.

Three steps of the great vehicle: Seeing through illusions to the heavenly pivot, traversing throughout the universe, ecstatically traveling to the moon.

The lesser vehicle centers on three ways of opening basic wisdom. They all use the Heavenly Eye to transmit life force and serve to extend life and increase longevity. The middle vehicle centers on three ways to open medium wisdom. They involve refraining from eating food in order to cultivate the yin spirit to wholeness and serve to rescue us from the cycle of destiny and death. The great vehicle centers on three ways to open highest wisdom. They involve cultivating the yang spirit, so that it can travel out of the body and serves as a method to subdue and control others.

The first three methods of wisdom and potential begin with sensing the life force, then move on to refining the yin spirit, and from there turn toward cultivating the yang spirit. This involves a transition in the way you think about how to practice. Sensing the life force is mainly a way to prepare for direct and remote sensing. Refining yin spirit is mainly a way to prepare for inner observation, penetrating vision and* cultivating yang spirit. Seen from a different angle, you start with enhancing your ability to remember, followed by cultivating your powers of logical thinking, analysis and problem solving. Here we only introduce the first three methods.

The First Step: Returning to Infancy and Recovering Memories

Formula: Remember – Recall – Recall Again

At nighttime enter the meditation hall and sit. Purposefully recall all the experiences of the day, starting from getting out of bed in the morning, putting on clothes, brushing your teeth ..... until evening. The more detailed and refined your recall, the better. In fact, the process of recalling means to check each memory of the day, what you have done from morning to evening, what you remember, what you forget, then adding up the various memories through recall. After this, recall again and think about whether there may still be something else to recall. If there is, repeat the practice again until you remember everything.

The Second Step: Discriminating True and False

Formula: Judge – Decide – Judge Again

After recalling the day's experiences, start to judge everything you did, what was good and right and what was a mistake, then make a decision. What o do if something was right? What to do if something was a mistake? What should I work on harder? What should I do to make it right? Subsequently, judge whether this decision is reasonable, flawed, or has loopholes.

The Third Step: Polishing Spirit Wisdom to a Clear Sparkle

Formula: Pose a question – consider it– pose another question

After you are done recalling your memories and judging them, begin to pose questions. Determine what you will do tomorrow. Once you have posed the question, consider it from different angles to see whether you can accomplish what you want, determine what is feasible, what impossible, what conditions are required and so on. Then pose another question.

Chapter Twelve

Refining the Internal Lines

The three barriers, three fields, six lines, and four areas are cultivated in sitting meditation. There is no other way. Here is how to refine the various lines.

1. Inner Nature Line

Enter the meditation hall and sit down facing the wall, about one arm's length away from it (use natural, half lotus, or full lotus posture). Seal the three lower yin orifices tight, place your hands on the knees, and let the eyes gaze straight forward into the distance. Next, gradually focus the spirit light, close to the eyes, touch the teeth lightly together, and press your tongue against the upper palate. Steady body, breath, and heart-and-mind, establish deep concentration, sit motionless, and meditate in silence.

When the heart-and-mind is crystal clear, allow the eyes to look straight ahead, the farther the better. See the far horizon in the distance, imagining it if you cannot see it. Spread your imaginary vision as far as you can, then slowly retrieve the scene you see (or conceive). Pull it in through the Heavenly Eye point, then focus it inside, guide it into the Eye, then again move it toward Heaven. After a short while, swiftly send spirit light out from the Heavenly Eye, the farther and faster the better. Ideally it should be lightning fast. Send it to the far ends of the sky, closely observing any scenery changes in the distance. After a while, retrieve it once more, moving it through the opening, the eyes, and again to heaven. Repeat the practice twice, making sure you do not pull too much. At the end, focus the light in the Postnatal Mirror.

2. Reflection Line

Once you are done with the inner nature line, move the spirit light issuing from the Postnatal Mirror all the way along the spine to Meeting Yin at the perineum, closely observin*g all changes at this point. The ancients called this "plucking treasure from the bottom of the sea." From here guide the spirit light all the way up along the spine to Hundred Meeting at the top of the head, closely observing all changes around this point. From here move it back again to the perineum. Do this twice, ending by sending it to the perineum. After that, swiftly raise your head and look straight ahead, at the same time emitting the

spirit light from the perineum and the Heavenly Eyes, allowing the rays from both areas to intersect in accordance with the heavenly stems. The ancients called this "Kan and Li intersecting." From here, pull the light back and send it out again. To conclude, slowly settle it at the edge of your body universe.

3. Destiny-Cultivation Line

Refining both the destiny-cultivation and strength lines follows the methods of wisdom and potential as well as the practice of the Three Immortals. You work as follows.

Stack your hands in front of the lower abdomen, one palm on top of the back of the other, either one is fine. They should rest about 1.2 to 1.5 inches below the navel, applying equal pressure when pulling out and pressing in. Inhale as you pull out; exhale as you press in. Breathing should be even, deep, soft, and long. As you pull out, move very slowly, allowing the palms to curve into a hollow, so they are no longer flat. Pay attention to the feelings you experience in the abdomen and coccyx areas. You can take all the time you want as you pull out, depending on your circumstances. Once done, place both hands on the knees, lift your head and look straight ahead, breathing very steadily.

4. Strength Line

After working on the destiny-cultivation line, move immediately on to the strength line. Lift both hands in front of your chest, press both palms together solidly (closely joining fingertips, palms and bases). Let the fingertips point forward as the bases of the palms rest between the breasts, then slowly pull them back and forth. Inhale as you pull out, exhale as you press in. Breathing should be even, deep, fine and long. Throughout the process, pay attention to the feeling you experience in the chest and shoulder areas.

5. Broken Line: Three Steps

Step one: Pull energy out of the central and lower fields, then connect them. Step two: Connect the lower field and the Twelve-storied Tower. Step three: Cross the Magpie Bridge and connect it with the lower field. Here we will focus on step one, which goes:

Sit steadily in meditation and use conscious intention to coagulate internal *qi,* move it up and down in alignment with your breath. As you inhale, guide stem *qi* below the navel, let it intersect with the destiny-cultivation line and extend the lower field. As you exhale, guide the stem *qi* to move up, let it intersect with the strength line and extend the central field. Always as you inhale, let the *qi* flow beyond the navel; as you exhale, make sure it does not go beyond the heart. In this manner, each breath returns to the root.

Chapter Thirteen A

Attracting Immortality

The chapter, "The Heavenly Truth of Ancient Antiquity," in the *Huangdi neijing suwen*, says,

> The Emperor asked: "Why is it that older adults cannot bear children? Is it because their strength is exhausted? Or is due to the numbers of heaven?"
>
> Qibo replied: "When a girl is 7 years of age, the kidney *qi* becomes abundant. She begins to change her teeth and the hair grows longer. At 14, she begins to menstruate and is able to become pregnant. The movement of the great pulse is strong. The menses come regularly, and the girl is able to give birth. At age 21, the energy is steady, the last tooth has come out, and she is fully grown. When she reaches the age of 28, her tendons and bones are strong, her hair has reached its full length, and her body is flourishing and fertile. At 35, her yang brightness pulse begins to slacken, her face begins to wrinkle, her hair starts falling out.
>
> "When she reaches the age of 42, the pulse of the three yang regions deteriorates in the upper part of her body, her entire face is wrinkled, and her hair turns gray. At age 49, she can no longer become pregnant, and the circulation of the great pulse is decreased. Her menstruation is exhausted, and the gates of blood are no longer open. Her body declines, and she is no longer able to bear children.
>
> "When a boy is 8 years of age, the kidney *qi* is full, he begins to change his teeth and his hair grows longer. At 16, kidney *qi* is abundant, and semen arrives. Essence and *qi* overflow and leak easily, and if yin and yang (man and woman) unite, they can give birth to a child. At 24, kidney *qi* is balanced, tendons and bones are powerful, firm, and strong, and the wisdom teeth grow and lengthen. At 32, tendons and bones are good and flourishing, and the muscles are developed completely.
>
> "At 40, the kidneys begin to decline, hair starts to fall out and the teeth dry up like dead wood. At 48, yang *qi* is exhausted in the upper body, the complexion darkens, and the hair at the temples starts to turn white. At

56, the liver *qi* is weak and the tendons no longer move smoothly. At 64, the sperm is exhausted, essence is lacking, the kidneys decline, the body is bent, and teeth and hair are falling out. The kidneys govern water; they receive and store the essence of the five organs and six viscera, which causes organs to be vigorous and flow out swiftly. But today the five organs are weak, tendons and bones dissolve and degenerate, semen is exhausted. Thus the hair at the temples turns white, the body feels heavy, when walking the steps are not straight, and the ability to produce children is lost."

The Emperor asked: "Still, there are some old people who can still have children. How is this possible?"

Qibo replied: "These people exceed their heaven-given life expectancy because their *qi* meridians are always open and their kidney *qi* is in abundance. But even though they may have children, their productive age is limited to 64 in males and 49 in females. This is because the essence and *qi* of heaven and earth are exhausted."

The Emperor asked: "A practitioner of Dao who has reached an age of over a hundred years, can he still have children?"

Qibo replied: "A practitioner of Dao might be able to defeat old age and keep the body intact. Then, even if his body is very old, he can still have children."

Based on this discussion of the process of human birth, growth, decline, and aging, its stages of fertility and classification of physiology, Daoists divide the development of the human organism into five stages: young, sexually mature (lit., "leaking"), damaged, declining, and weak. Before boys reach the age of 16 and girls turn 14, their organism is young, which means they do not need to build a special foundation for cultivation, but can immediately practice the major methods of the great vehicle.

Once boys reach the age of 16 and girls turn 14, they produce semen or eggs, which means their organism is now sexually mature. Sexual activity leaks energy from the body, so the body is no longer complete but must be repaired. To do so, they must first restore the body to its original state and build a foundation for cultivation. Only then can they practice the major methods of the great vehicle.

When men and women engage in intercourse and give birth to children, they have damaged organisms. To cultivate perfection under these conditions, the first thing to do is strengthen essence and blood. This repairs the damaged organism, and from there you can restore it to its original state and build a foundation for cultivation. Only when it recovers the state of a young organism can they practice the major methods. When men reach the age of 56 and wom-

en turn 42, their organisms are declining. When men reach the age of 64 and women turn 49, they are weak.

To cultivate perfection with a declining or weak organism, you must first harvest twelve-fold *qi* power by capturing the essence and florescence of heaven and earth. These will repair the organism. Store and nurture essence and *qi,* increase and strengthen vitality and vigor. From here, supplement and stabilize essence and blood, repair even the sexually active organism, and build a strong foundation of cultivation. Only then can you recover a young organism and practice the great methods.

In men, eight is the main number; it is a number of yin within yin. In women, seven is the main number; it is a number of yin within yang. 8 x 8 = 64 and 7 x 7 = 49. So, when a woman is 49 and a man is 64, they are considered old. Human life is calculated as 7 x 8 x 5 = 280 (the yin and yang numbers combined with the five phases). This means that an infant should stay in the mother's womb for 280 days. 280 is a minimum, and anything less than 80 means a miscarriage. Being pregnant for nine months and giving birth in the tenth month matches the basic numbers for human beings.

Women develop in multiples of seven. 2 x 7 = 14, so women normally experience menstruation before the age of 14. 2 x 8 = 16, so when boys turn 16, they should have experienced ejaculation once. These are ancient Chinese concepts. Birthdays should really only be celebrated at the age of 49 for women and 64 for men. For anyone younger than that, birthday celebrations are not allowed. Old sayings specify what to do on the 1st birthday, on the 2nd birthday, and so on, all the way to 100. There are several significant numbers in human life, notably 66, 73, and 84. When women get to be 49, and men 64, the number 280 becomes invalid.

Women's menstruation matches the cycle of the moon, normally spanning 28 to 30 days. If the actual number of days in the cycle is below or above these numbers, it is considered abnormal. The duration of menstruation in China should last for one cycle. Five days is standard, otherwise it is abnormal: this is known as one cycle. Men should match the women's cycles, but a man's cycle is comparatively better.

The *Daozang jiyao* (Collected Essentials of the Daoist Canon) says, "If you want to cultivate the techniques described in the *Lingbao bifa* (also known as the practice of the Three Immortals and the methods of women's alchemy), you must first practice 'attracting immortality.' Without this, you will not succeed in any of the others." That means, attracting immortality is mandatory for every step of the *Lingbao bifa.* It serves as the foundation of all major Daoist great vehicle methods, repairing leaks and recovering the source, thus pervading every aspect of the *Lingbao bifa.*

Attracting immortality means practicing from Wuji to the nine palaces, going through all numbers from zero to nine.

Theory of Attracting Immortality

The theory works according to numbers. Thus, Wuji (zero) at its source is *qi*; it embodies the chaos prime of original oneness. Taiji (the one) is originally without root; in alternating embrace, it gives rise to the two forces. The three powers see their original nature and are known as heaven, earth, and humanity.

Yin and yang give rise to the four main emblems. The *Hetu* determines east and west. The five phases match the two *qi,* and the myriad beings come to life through spirit and life force. The trigrams Qian and Kun, aligned in the six directions, allow sun, moon, and stars to move along their course.

The seven stars set up rulership; the four seasons divide and shine forth. The eight trigrams are arranged in proper order; the *Luoshu* clarifies their numbers. The nine palaces structure the world; the *Yijing* and its commentaries are the classic of the sages.

Attracting immortality is the prerequisite for the practice of the Three Immortals. It includes methods to repair leaks, establish a firm foundation, and recover the source. Any form of meditation requires first the cultivation of attracting immortality. Teachers lead the way and open the doors, but you cannot enter them and attract immortality if you do not know the way. Attracting immortality comes with various methods of wisdom and potential as well as those described in the *Lingbao bifa.* The methods, moreover, come with various techniques, which in turn center on key principles. They in their turn relate to particular methods.

Attracting immortality is a form of dual cultivation of inner nature and life-destiny. It divides into twelve methods or steps. The first three involve healing exercises, especially walking practices. Steps 4 through 12 serve to resolve any issues not dealt with in the first steps. Each step focuses on a particular question, to be answered in the 4th, 5th, 6th step, and so on. Attracting immortality is essentially just one method, but one method leads to two, two lead to three, three lead to four, and so on. Still, the basic three techniques combine into one, they really are just one, which means it does not matter where you start. Any and all are good for cultivation. Once you have a good grip on the basic cultivation system and thoroughly steadied your breathing, you can practice as you like. Then, when you feel your lower field getting hot, immediately start the silent circulation of the five phases. As the heat flows from the lower field, you can advance yang fire and reduce yin impact—it is especially good for the elderly.

Once women start menstruating and men begin ejaculating, they marry and give birth to children. To recover from this, they must repair the leakage, recover the source, and strengthen the organism. To do so, men refine essence while women refine blood. Men need to guard the seminal tract while women should seal the iron swing door: this stops leakage and reverses flow. It is vital

to seal the three yin orifices at the pelvic floor, repair the leakage and recover the source. Men start from the bottom (lower abdomen), from the inside out; women start from the top, from the outside in. Women first cultivate life-destiny, then refine inner nature; men first cultivate inner nature, then refine life-destiny. This is one rule. However, the original technique is to first work on inner nature, then on destiny.

The practice of clearing the orifice of brightness that lead toward the inner organs is a special feature of both the practice of the Three Immortals and of attracting immortality. When there is a change in the secondary channels, immediately switch your focus to the primary meridians. When sense organs revert the flow, immediately switch to the inner organs. Attracting immortality is mainly used to seal the nine orifices of brightness. The ancients counted nine, but in our system we have added one more, the navel, and therefore we speak of ten orifices.

The central feature of attracting immortality is refining the breath twenty-four times. This is basic. Exhale but do not let the *qi* not rise above the heart, thus linking it to the root known as the prime of heaven. Inhale and guide the *qi* down beyond the navel, thus linking it to the root known as the source of earth. Use ordinary respiration to lead into perfect breathing, thereby effecting the transformation of cosmic *qi* into stem *qi*. Inhale beyond the navel; when you exhale, make sure it does not rise above the heart. Instead move the stem *qi* up and down between the middle and lower fields. In antiquity, this was called "breath by breath recover the root." The breath should be soft, even, and long.

Do twenty-four rounds of this, which should take at least half an hour. As you breathe, keep your upper body immobile and avoid lifting your shoulders. Start with normal breathing, then move on to reverse breathing. As you inhale, send the *qi* down beyond the navel, but do not let it go all the way to Meeting Yin, lest a leak form at the bottom, which is very dangerous. Usually during your twenty-four rounds, you will start to feel heat in your lower body, but do not move, not even if you feel pain. In this way, you create the elixir of immortality. Also, at this time pay close attention to the arising of spirit light and slowly retrieve and gather it, focusing it between the eyebrows. Steady the breath well, sit strongly in meditation, and guide the *qi* to cleanse your system.

The Twelve Methods

1st Method: Focusing the Heart-and-Mind in Sitting Meditation

This is where you as the student of Daoist cultivation begin the great work. First find a meditation space, invite two or three close friends to keep you company and together practice while walking, resting, sitting, sleeping, and standing, always with complete dedication and never slackening. Deeply immerse yourself in the meditation hall, meditate deep in the heart, concentrate spirit to generate *qi,* then concentrate *qi* to generate essence. Concentrate like this for many days, and your appetite gradually increases, your four limbs become more flexible, your lower field becomes warm, and your outer genitals glow vigorously.

Henceforth, as soon as you practice sitting meditation and your life force is aroused, focus your mind and organism to see them as the universe, so that your body becomes like the celestial bodies, your heart-and-mind becomes like heaven, your kidneys become like earth, and you naturally become one with the universe. Sit deeply in oblivion and relish nonbeing, emptiness, and cosmic vastness.

Enter the meditation hall, sit with your body upright and your legs either in loose, natural, half lotus, or full lotus position. Keep your lips gently closed, teeth lightly touching, and the tongue pushed against the upper palate. Palms facing down and fingers apart, place your hands on the knees. Close your eyes and focus your heart-and-mind, steady your body and breathing, then calm spirit in emptiness and nonbeing.

Let the heart-and-mind have no thoughts, make sure spirit is free from affairs. The myriad things forgotten, there is no seeing, no thinking, no hearing, nor considering, no giving, no receiving, no within, no without. Use mind and spirit to be utterly one and completely free from all thinking, rest in vastness without even a single affair to consider. Contain the light of your eyes, condense the tones of your ears, seal the *qi* of your tongue, and listen with your heart breathing: these are the four symbols of harmony. Be clear, empty, open, and silent, forget all things in emptiness and nonbeing. Flow with the Wuji as contained in the symbols, go along with naturalness, and merge completely with the divine law.

Explanation

The *Xiuzhen tu* documents the Daoist vision of the human body as the furnace and stove of internal cultivation. The first step of attracting immortality is to focus the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation, which matches the first method in the text. It has a chart whose upper part says that the human body contains

84,000 pores. As you inhale and exhale through these by focusing your mind and body, you can discover a separate heaven and earth within and can properly perceive heaven and earth outside: you become the universe. Within your body universe, then, you look for heaven and earth, and thereby come to perceive heaven and earth outside properly, seeing the Taiji emerge. The most basic requirement of this practice is to be able to sit. However, we do not force everyone to practice this: those willing do it; those unwilling do not.

Focusing the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation is also a process of closing the eyes and repenting, finding a way to fuse the yin spirit with the yang spirit. Going beyond ordinary perspectives, you are yet not engaging in magical thinking. During practice, the highest ideal is to have no thoughts whatsoever, so any form of magical thinking is fake, compromising the ideal.

As mentioned above, many "non" states will appear, so think carefully whether they are all just one. Under what circumstances is it best to practice attracting immortality? This is the first question to address. For attracting immortality, Daoists have one key rule: after entering the meditation hall, first pay respect to heaven and earth, then to the ancestral teachers. Hang a picture of the teacher(s) on the wall, representing major figures such as Master Lü, Master Zhongli, Wang Chongyang, or one of the Seven Perfected, plus a list that presentes the names of the masters of all successive generations. Only start practicing after you have paid your respect to the teachers. This is the Daoist custom, lest you forget the ancestors.

There are four ways to sit cross-legged, each with its own formula: loose, like a fairy maiden among scattered flowers: imagine many flowers on the ground and girls picking them; the main purpose here is to open the hip; natural, described as everything being level and stable; half lotus, also known as the three pillars; and full lotus, called ascending the heavenly ladder. The heavenly ladder occurs frequently in the classical texts; in fact, there is one in the head and one in the torso. As mentioned above, in the human body, the head matches heaven and the abdomen matches earth. This means the spine in the back of the torso is the first heavenly ladder. In addition, the heart matches heaven while the kidneys match earth, so there is another heavenly ladder.

Daoists pick their terms very carefully, which means each explanation can be read on three levels. For example, natural sitting is called level on all four sides and stable in the eight directions. Basically the word "level" means: "not off-kilter or tilted, not concave, like the surface of still water;" that is, be very still, very even: the first requirement for this is to keep your body unmoving. Alternatively, the term is also used for "stable and still" as well as to indicate the verb, "to flatten." In a different Dimension, it also means "ordinary": the requirement here is to sit, settle down, and be calm.

The word also indicates the flat pronunciation, the first of the four Chinese tones. In practice, this means that, after meditation, everyone will make

some sort of sound. If you hear an unpleasant sound, it means that you did not steady yourself sufficiently. You need to steady the entire space, so that when you make a sound, it is nice and beautiful. All inhalations and exhalations must be in equal proportion, reaching proper understanding of the idea of "sound."

As regards the word "stable," its basic meaning is "secure" or "fixed." As a verb, it means "to be stable," that is, everyone must settle down and cannot move. In addition, it also connotes "accurate and reliable," which means it is required to be "accurate," which here means that the sitting base is stable and the spine is upright. If the spine is not straight, it is off and therefore unstable.

When sitting naturally there is another requirement, which is that the Bubbling Spring point of both feet must be sealed [by having something press on the soles]. When sitting in meditation and the soles of the feet feel hot or issue hot *qi,* it means that Bubbling Spring is not sealed. Only when it is sealed can the *qi* rise up internally.

In the expression "meditate deep in the heart," "deep" means: "dark and obscure," "immersed and sunk," as well as "the world after death," which does in fact exist.

The World Health Organization put forward several requirements for human life, summarily called future medical science: first, it discusses quality of life, whether life is good or not; second, it discusses what happens before birth and after death. With regard to either realm, Chinese Daoists have studied them the most and to the deepest level. When focusing the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation, meditating deep in the heart means examining what happens after death while still alive. How to understand this? You must "contain the light of the eyes" during practice, therefore, it is important to close your eyes. As you meditate deep in the heart, take a close look at both worlds of yin and yang, the dead and the living.

"Contain the light of the eyes" means to close your eyes, but even then, are your eyes really closed? The word "contain" has three meanings. First, it indicates "to put something in your mouth, neither spit it out nor swallow it; just keep it in there."

"Contain the light of the eyes" accordingly means to hold on to spirit so that it neither leaves the inside nor the outside of the body but stays within the human body universe. The methods of attracting immortality serve to teach you what spirit is doing in the body, but they do not start out that way. Rather, they begin by telling you to "contain the light of the eyes." This means, after the eyes are closed, they turn back and look inside.

Second, it means "to carry some kind of meaning, feeling, and the like, which is not fully revealed," that is, hide and do not reveal yourself. The Chinese people have the tendency that, if they like something but cannot get it, to keep thinking about it after seeing it. They have thoughts like, "It would be great if I owned this!" "How can I get it?" and the like. When people think this

way, they are in fact already satisfied, because they have already seen the thing and thought about it. Why think about it? This is how the *Taiyi jinghua zongzhi* came to be. Daoists believe that what we see is not an object, nor is what we contain and think about. The only thing that exists is our primordial spirit, and by practicing this, the level of our primordial spirit improves.

Third, the word indicates that "something exists within." This refers to the eyes turning inward and looking inside the body: Are there five organs and six viscera? What are they doing? Are there bones and what kind? What is the inner body thinking about? What is it doing? What is the brain thinking about? What is it doing?

From all this it becomes clear that "contain the light of the eyes" is not superficial; its meaning is actually very deep. After practicing this, there will be no leakage from the eyes. "The eyes do not leak, and the spirit soul comes to rest in the liver." This is important, and we will come back to it. Since the eyes transform spirit and are in fact the place where it enters, they also make sure that it cannot leak.

At this time it important to accomplish three things: first, nourish spirit in the body universe; second, cherish or hold on to something you have a special feeling for, so that spirit can come back to it; third, make sure you feel clearly that spirit has returned to the body, that it is really there. When working on attracting immortality, these three are hard to control and hard to achieve.

In the phrase, "condense the tones of your ears," "condense" refers to three cultivation methods. First, imeans "congeal or coagulate, liquid turning solid when frozen, gas becoming liquid due to reduced temperature or increased pressure." You condense essence and *qi* from all the different parts of the body. Why use the ears? The ears serve to hear—can they see anything? Aren't the eyes the only sense of seeing, while the ears cannot see a thing? In fact, the ears can also see things. If something falls to the ground and the eyes do not see it, you still know from your ears that something has fallen, so in the end did you see it or hear it? The eyes may not see it, but the ears know where it has fallen. Through the ears you can generally know where the thing is and often you have to use the ears rather than the eyes to find it. Therefore, to condense essence, the ears are used.

Second, It also means "to gather," that is, it can gather things. It gathers spirit and life force. Why can't you see the life force while practicing according to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*? Because you could not gather it. Third, there is the connotation of "to concentrate," most importantly essence, *qi,* and spirit, gathered together into one. At this point, essence, *qi,* and spirit will manifest. By using the ears as the prime sensory organs, all the transformations of essence, *qi,* and spirit are explained: this is a very profound Daoist theory.

"Tones" literally means phonemes, that is, vowels, i. e., parts of words other than consonants and pronunciation, including head vowels; and sounds

other than consonants, head vowels, and ways of pronunciation that involve "lingering sounds." If someone produces a swear word, no one likes to hear it; if you produced strange sounds, no one can meditate peacefully, so make only beautiful sounds.

"Tones" also refers to "rhythmic sounds" or melodies, sounds that are melodic and beautiful. In addition, the word means "charming and humorous," referring to the charm of nature and the blowing of the wind; we listen to the wind and hear the breath of nature. Listen carefully to everyone's breathing during practice, note if everyone is in sync, otherwise continue to steady your breathing. Once everyone's breathing is in sync, it sounds very beautiful, just like wind blowing. Thus we speak of "wind tones," the sensation of a natural wind melody.

"Listen with your heart breathing" raises the issue whether in listening you only use your ears. Yes, you have ears, but are you certain you hear only with them? Apart from the ears, is there anything else that could let you hear and see? For example, when you are asleep or drunk, you cannot hear anyone talking to you. You should be able to hear, but in fact you cannot. Daoists prefer to listen without using the ears, instead using the heart-and-mind. This refers neither to the heart of the cardiovascular system nor to that of the entire body. Not only can the ears hear, but the head can hear and so can the pores. For example, place a piece of ice near your back while sitting in meditation, and you will know where it gets cold. People are not actually learning through touch, but by hearing. Similarly when people feel hot steam, Daoists call this hearing. Thus, the ears are not the only senses used for listening.

"Seal the *qi* of your tongue" literally involves sealing. In this context, the word "seal" means that the tongue and its *qi* should stay in the mouth; gently closing the lips is considered sealing, i. e., closing the mouth and sealing the lips. Another meaning is "closed": keep the teeth closed, having them touch lightly.

Why do the lips and teeth connect in the practice of attracting immortality will be discussed later. But is doing it that simple? Do not assume that it is just a matter of simply closing your lips. Rather, closing means that the energy circulates along a certain path, but where exactly does it go? What is the purpose of having the teeth touching? Ultimately what appears here is a form of nonbeing. "Sealed" means being closed, nothing there; it points to a division into outside and inside. Plus, there are "tongue" and "*qi*," the former to be pressed against the upper palate. When we first practice attracting immortality, the tongue presses the upper palate to connect the Conception and Governing Vessels.

Roll the tongue up as hard as you can. This is quite like the Indian method that calls for the lingual frenulum to be snipped, so the tongue can roll up better. This is true yoga, also called holding the breath to absorb and emit energy. But there is a prerequisite: men must be able to retract their genitals like a horse,

while women should know how to keep their yin orifices closed. Only then can the tongue roll up, which also allows the *qi* to rise. Ordinary people cannot do this. Pay close attention as to whether the tongue is just reaching to the upper palate or actually pressing against it. If the latter, which part presses, top or underside? These are important questions. As a beginner, best suck up the front of the tongue, letting it slowly move up. We will come back to this later.

Now, let us turn to "*qi,*" focusing on three ways of transformation. To "contain the light of your eyes, condense the tones of your ears, seal the *qi* of your tongue, and listen to your heart breathing," first breathe in and out through the nose to realize these four dimensions. We put these four points together, so they are united in harmony, as already noted above.

"Meditate deep in the heart, concentrate spirit to generate *qi,* then concentrate *qi* to generate essence. Concentrate like this for many days, and your appetite gradually increases." This refers to placing spirit first. Daoist scriptures usually place the highest level first and the lowest last. All the materials in the classics are of a very high level, as is the practice of attracting immortality. To explain things from a lower-level angle, essence serves as the residence of spirit, which means essence comes first, then spirit. Without essence, there is no spirit.

By concentrating essence, you can make spirit whole, but if essence is damaged, spirit has no place to go: this is called failure to guard. If essence is insufficient, you lose the foundation of spirit; if you are tired and exhausted, you lose its fortification. When the residence of spirit is gone, calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice does not work. This is meant by the expression, essence matches spirit. We will speak more of this below. Essence is the mother of *qi*; if it is deficient, there is no *qi,* and without *qi,* people die. Being without *qi* is due to lack of essence: the cause of death.

Essence is the residence of spirit. If spirit is lost, essence weakens. For this reason you must "concentrate spirit to generate *qi,* concentrate *qi* to generate essence." Essence, *qi,* and spirit should united as one, never to separate. If essence is wasted, you die; if you lose spirit, you also die; being without *qi* means death. That is, if any of the three is gone, your life is over. This is not to say that the body will die, maybe it will, but our main concern here is not body. Rather, as the *Huangdi neijing* says, essence, *qi,* and spirit are keys to continued existence of human life and destiny.

Daoists believe that the key thing the human body needs to grow is essence: without it, people die. When you are on a vegetarian diet, pay attention what exactly that means. The Daoist system has its own definition and its own dietary manuals. They call vegetables grass food and maintain that eating a strictly vegetarian diet can be dangerous, especially for the elderly. The elderly like to eat what they want, so the question is what signs indicate danger.

In Daoism, vegetarian eating means combining foods correctly, adding various metals, minerals, and herbs, notably Chinese knotweed, mushrooms,

fungi, ginseng, and more, things ordinary people never get to eat. Daoist have a saying: Eating grass food shortens life-destiny. Master Lü said that eating only grass food and tofu is not good, and to live mostly on these tends to cause gall or kidney stones. So the way of eating a vegetarian diet requires a careful study. Vegetarian food is excellent, eating vegetarian and refining an elixir equally do not just involve a single thing but depend on the combination of multiple ingredients that should never be less than five types (as in minor elixir circulation).

How, then, should you focus the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation? Once you sit properly, open your eyes and look straight ahead. Look far into the distance and retrieve distant spirit light to your eyes; this is called "containing the light of the eyes." Focus it right between the eyebrows and gently close your eyes. After closing your eyes, relax the entire body, releasing shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands. This is not steadying the body, so just let yourself relax. Place the hands, palms down and fingers apart, gently on the knees. This is the first hand gesture used in attracting immortality, known as "Peace." After you are properly steady, keep the spine straight, your lips gently closed, your teeth lightly touching, your tongue pressed against the upper palate, and your chin tucked in. Thus you harmonize the four dimensions (eyes, nose, mouth and ears). This is the foundation of the first method.

Now meditate for a while and start to purify yourself. Steadily breathe in and out through the nose while at the same time finding a way to let ears, mouth, and eyes breathe, too. In addition, the head should also be able to breathe, especially with your intention centered on the nose. People have three open spaces in their bodies, the upper, middle, and lower. The purpose of breathing steadily through the nose is to stabilize the upper space, so you can leap out from it. The upper space is where spirit rests and from which it enters into the body. It is known as spirit chamber. To steady this open space, you should let the head follow the breath by focusing inward and releasing outward. Once the spirit chamber is all set, you can "contain the light of your eyes, condense the tones of your ears, seal the *qi* of your tongue, and listen to your heart breathing." All this is how to work with the upper space. Once you move down from here, you reach the middle space.

To work with the middle space, similarly breathe very softly. As you inhale softly, you bring the *qi* into the lower abdomen, which you can do because there are two open spaces here, the thoracic and abdominal cavities. They represent another heaven and earth. Softly focus it in the lower abdomen, little by little increasing force, until the lower area is empty. The middle space may not move, but this does not matter. Do not worry about it. It does not have to move, since it is originally empty. The lungs, too, are empty: if they were not, people would be sick and possibly die.

Once again, steady your breathing, then move on to internal breathing. After practicing internal breathing, start to do pore breathing. Now you are ready to understand the real meaning of "focus the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation." It means to focus mind, body, organism, and universe. Here the heart matches heaven and the kidneys match earth. This concludes the first method and sitting starts to feel much better.

Explanation

1. When focusing the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation, focus spirit light between the eyebrows; when calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, focus it in front of your eyes—working with a different distance from the forehead. As for which is in front and which behind, we will explain later. Here, when we speak of practicing "being still," we refer to stillness in the meditation hall as well as in body, organism, heart, thoughts, and head. Altogether, this means that the heart-and-mind is completely still. Master Lü said:

> Sounds being quiet is not as good as the body being still; the body being still is not as good as the heart being still. When the heart is still, the myriad sounds are all forgotten. When it is agitated, even if you push the body to sit still, force yourself to sit quietly, never allow your body to listen, become like a withered tree, you will never attain anything as long as you live, just make your body stiff and dry.

2. The purpose of using the "Peace" hand gesture is to open the yang meridians of the entire body and prevent catching a cold after being exposed to wind and rain.

3. Master Lü said: Placing the hands correctly is a prime way to build the foundation. After proper refinement, the foundation is complete, and whether it is good or not you need to check for yourself. Is the spine straight or not? What is the purpose of keeping the lips gently closed? Are the hands relaxed or not? And so on.

4. The purpose of steadying the breath through the nose has to do with its location above the cervical vertebra. Master Lü said: Steady the breath and calm spirit above the narrow stairs. For this, strongly center your intention on the nose. This is because the nose is the reference point among the upper seven orifices; it is their median line. The nose is also located at the most difficult place, where the Conception and Governing Vessels intersect to form the small heavenly circuit. Thus it is important to focus on the nose. This first step is to make sure ears, nose, eyes, and mouth all can breathe; the second step is to let the entire head focus and release. Notice whether the upper halfmoon sphere becomes an open space and whether it can move. When it forms an open space,

slowly start shifting your intention down, reaching all the way to the lower field area in the lower abdomen.

5. Once you breathe steadily in and out through the nose and the upper halfmoon sphere has started to move, steady the breath and calm spirit, then slowly shift the intention down along the central line, all the way to the lower field in the lower abdomen. Inhale and gently focus the *qi* in the lower abdomen, with the goal of nurturing. Because the *qi* is located above, the intention is below; since yang is above, yin is below. Now as you keep breathing, the *qi* in the upper space starts to change, generating a tiny, minute force, which is called perfect essence. Move this from the upper space to the lower field. The *Lingbao bifa* calls this the work of a hundred days. These so-called days do not represent a time frame, the text does not actually refer of a hundred days in concrete terms; it just means a major effort. As you do the practice pay attention to whether it moves down along the surface, through the Conception Vessel, or along the line connecting the three fields. There are three levels and three distinct ways. Find out which is which for you.

6. As you inhale, gently focus the *qi* in the lower abdomen; as you exhale, release it out. While inhaling into the lower abdomen, little by little increase force. In fact, the moment you gently focus it in the lower abdomen, you are starting to nurture a little bit of perfect essence. Now notice whether or not you have a lower field. Is there any perfect essence coming down? Does it reach the lower field? If it does, make sure to nurture it. How can you make it come down? The first way is to have your eyes look gently downward, looking at the tip of your nose. We also do this as when we practice calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice: "The eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*."

Using the eyes as the representative of spirit, very gently send perfect essence down into the Kun Palace (lower field). Doing this does not work the same for everyone, and some people require a long time. The elixir scriptures say that it takes 300 days for it to come down, which is about one year. This means that the movement from above to below seems like to take a whole year, efforts worth one year of practice. It really means that in the beginning, the process is really slow. But the texts also note that a year contains months, a month contains days, a day contains hours, and an hour contains quarter hours, meaning that there are people who accomplish it very fast.

7. After it has come down, once again breathe into the lower field, little by little increasing force. The purpose of increasing force is to stabilize the lower field. At this time you still may not know where exactly the lower field is. For the majority of men, it will go into the bladder; in most women, it will enter the large cauldron (uterus). In very few people, it will enter the lower field. To find it, look for an area moving about 1.2 to 1.5 inches below the navel, or at least find some part below the navel that is moving. Finally, as you focus it in the

lower abdomen, become aware of sensations in the front genitals. To enhance those, focus it in the lower abdomen and simultaneously lift up the anus and contract the front genital area. Once you have this skill, perfect essence will enter the lower field. Focus it in the lower field, lest it goes astray and ends up under its edge. Conclude by once more practicing internal and pore breathing.

The main purpose of focusing the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation is to correct the meditation posture. To steady the external shape, first you need to be able to sit upright. Regulate the upper and lower halfmoon spheres of body and mind, that is, make sure head, chest, and abdomen are in a straight line.

This method can be explained much deeper when it is connected to the practice of the Three Immortals and then *Lingbao bifa*. This method above needs to be achieved or else you cannot move on. The *Lingbao bifa* requires the whole body to be still, rather it only requires a small part to move. For example it is not a simple movement when silently circulating the five phases.

2nd Method: Stabilizing the Body

The first thing in quiet sitting is stabilizing the body. Start by relaxing the entire body, making each part feel loose and limp, but make sure the spine is straight. From here, you can just sit. Once settled in meditation, do not move your body, maintaining its natural straightness. Most importantly, make sure the chest is open and flat, the spine is straight and upright; then close your eyes and look straight forward. When stabilizing the breath and calming spirit, body and mind divide into upper and lower halfmoon spheres. Spirit and *qi* are distinguished according to winter and summer solstice; body and spirit match the trigrams Kan and Li, and the five phases are represented as east, spirit soul, and wood; west, material soul, and metal; south, spirit, and fire; north, essence, and water; and center, intention, and earth.

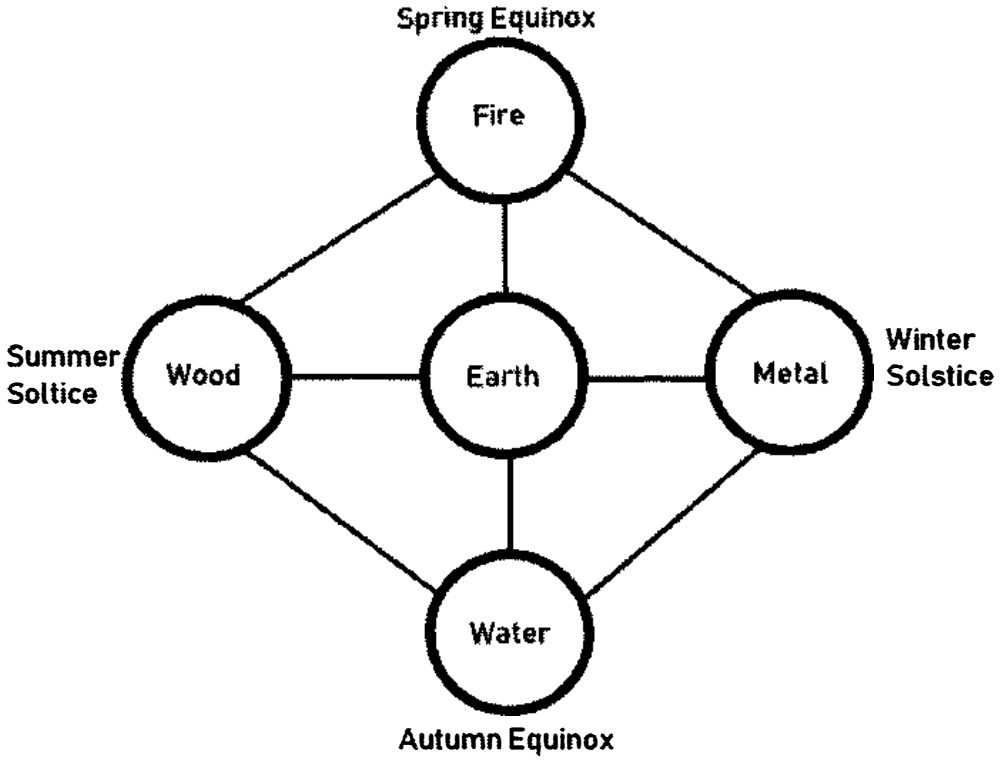
Explanation

1. The second method is much more difficult than the first. Once you can sit properly upright, begin to stabilize the body. The reason why this method goes back to the body is to see whether you are sitting correctly and whether the three lower yin orifices are sealed. It is important to seal the lower orifices.

2. "Stabilizing the breath and calming spirit" means that as you stabilize the breath, you must start to stabilize spirit, which is not easy to do. In order for spirit to be quiet, first calm; unless it is calm, it will never quiet down. Calming spirit recognizes two fundamental states of "being occupied with affairs" and "free from affairs." Being free from affairs, then first finding quiet and moving on to a calm spirit is very rare; being occupied with affairs, then first becoming calm and later finding stillness is more common. When doing this

practice, the intention is to deal with distracting thoughts, since we tend to be occupied with affairs all the time. People have the seven emotions and six desires, which makes it impossible for them to be calm. Now, why do we have seven emotions but only six desires?

3. "With breathing stabilized and spirit calm, body and mind divide into upper and lower halfmoon spheres. Spirit and *qi* divide according to winter and summer solstice, while body and spirit match (some texts say "occupy the positions of") the trigrams Kan and Li." The following diagram explains this.



In this chart representing the system of attracting immortality, the five phases—wood, fire, earth, metal, and water—are in the inner circle. In the *Lingbao bifa*, they transform to rest in the outer circle, matching the spring and autumn equinoxes as well as the winter and summer solstices. Combining the two, here are two circles, one outside, the other inside. In addition, heaven (the sky) is shown at the bottom, while earth is at the top. This is because before birth the embryo's head is down. After birth, no matter how the earth revolves, how the moon turns, or how the sun rotates, people's feet are still on the ground and their head reaches toward the sky. It can be clearly seen that the Chinese have extensively studied the time before and after birth.

According to the practice of the Three Immortals, when practicing immortality on the human level, "use the body as the furnace, *qi* as the medicine, the heart as fire, and the kidneys as water. In the process of nine reversions and seven returns, the trigrams Kan and Li join together and elixir circulation based on the golden fluid emerges." When you achieve this level, you have completed

the immortality practice on the human level within the practice of the Three Immortals.

"Body and mind divide into upper and lower halfmoon spheres." This means that the heart-and-mind follows the breath to create the upper halfmoon sphere, while the body does not move and thus establishes the lower halfmoon sphere. Using the halfmoon as a metaphor for the body does not refer to the common division of the body into upper and lower sections, described as halfmoon spheres, nor does the term "heart" here refer to the organic heart of the body. In the practice of the Three Immortals, the upper and lower halfmoon spheres are the kidneys and the heart, which manifest during the *mao* (5-7am) and *you* (5-7pm) hours of the heavenly circuit. The heart-and-mind tends to think about the outside world, and when you inhale, think of *qi* entering the body through the pores from all four sides and eight directions.

"Spirit and *qi* are distinguished according to winter and summer solstice." These expressions refer to two extreme points. Inhale like an object freezing in winter. Exhale like heat rising in summer. Spirit is like something frozen in winter; *qi* is like heat rising in summer heat. These are the two extremes.

"Body and spirit match the trigrams Kan and Li." The trigrams manifest in certain positions. When the external body is immobile, it matches yin and holds the position of Kan ☵ (water); when it moves, it matches yang. Once there is internal movement and a vital spirit, it matches yang and holds the position of Li ☲ (fire). While sitting to practice attracting immortality, internal movement is most important; the external body does not move and is supplementary. Within the human world with its affairs and things, the outer circle is described with the trigram Water. Great *qi* does not move and belongs to yin. At this time gather and collect the five phases, beginning by merging Kan and Li, stabilize the body, and examine the directions, finding the correct position of prenatal existence.

You gather and collect the five phases by combining wood (liver), east, and spirit soul; metal (lungs), west, and material soul; fire(heart), south, and spirit; water (kidneys), north, and essence; plus earth (spleen), center, and intention. This is the first way to stabilize the body and gather and collect the five phases. To do this work, you must change the order of the phases time and again until eventually you stop at a certain position, which represents the weakest among your inner organs (not necessarily indicating disease).

After that, you can start your organ practice from here, it being the most sensitive position. The prenatal position, moreover, matches it: wood in the east with spirit soul matches the liver; metal in the west with the material soul matches the lungs. Do not reveal your prenatal position to anyone.

4. "Gather and collect the five phases." Here the word for "gather" has two pronunciations as it refers to body and spirit. More specifically, when pronounced zan, it means "gather" or "save." While silently circulating the five

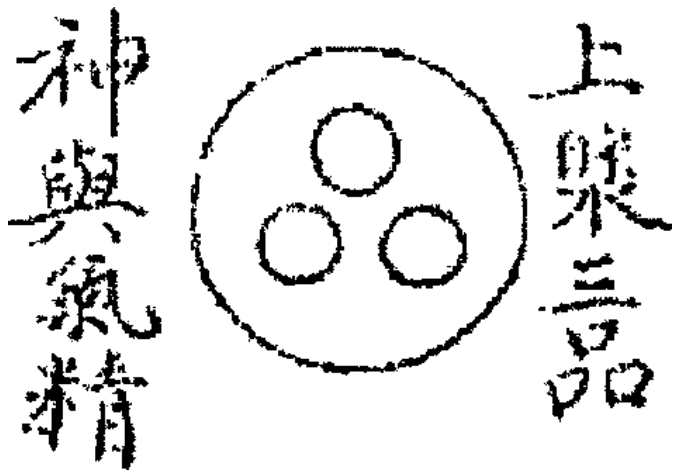
phases, are your concentrating, assembling, concentrating, or storing the essence of five phases? When pronounced *zhan*, it has the meaning of "focus," "collect," and "assemble." Some people silently circulate the five phases by assembling them, but sometimes this is not enough. During the practice you must pay attention to this.

A written variant of the word, moreover, that appears in some classical texts is *zhan* 占, "to divine." It, too, has two pronunciations. In the first tone, *zhān* means "prediction." For example, "in ancient times people used tortoise shells, yarrow sticks, and other things, later generations used copper coins and maybe ivory mahjong tiles to determine good or bad fortune." Make a prediction for yourself: Can the five phases circulate? Is it a true circulation or fake? Predict again, if only one inner organ moves, will there be any danger?

In the fourth tone, *zhàn* means "possess" or "acquire with force." In this context, it means to forcefully capture the essence of the five phases, which is not easy. It is necessary to seize it, capture it with force, and firmly possess it. Another meaning is "to be in a certain position or situation." Daoists tend to have great self-confidence, but to gain the upper hand, you must be in a favorable position and encounter positive conditions. What are these positive conditions? To begin, build a solid and good foundation. If you circulate the five phases when the breath is stabilized and the body quiet, you will be successful. You must have the upper hand. What does that mean? If spirit is not there, *qi* will not move. If the *qi* does not move, essence will not flow. So what to do about "gather"? Accumulate or divine? It is important to analyze this carefully.

5. In attracting immortality, you keep stabilizing breath and body until the end, and for this you must gather the five phases. To do so, and before you silently circulate them, you must establish a strong foundation, firmly stabilizing the breath. Use your breath to make the five organs settle and sink down: this is a form of purification. Slowly settle them, making sure each takes its proper position. From here, you can advance to the next step.

6. Another important question in attracting immortality is the relationship between essence, *qi,* and spirit. The *Qingjing jing* contains a chart that shows it, noting that "superior elixirs require three ingredients: spirit, *qi,* and essence." Here spirit is the chief, *qi* is the minister, and essence is the people. This means that spirit comes first, *qi* is next, and essence follows. In the chart, the upper circle represents spirit; *qi* is on the left, and essence is on the right. However, the chart can be modified. If so, who comes first when you silently circulate the five phases? Who appears first when you stabilize the breath? Who is first when you build the foundation?

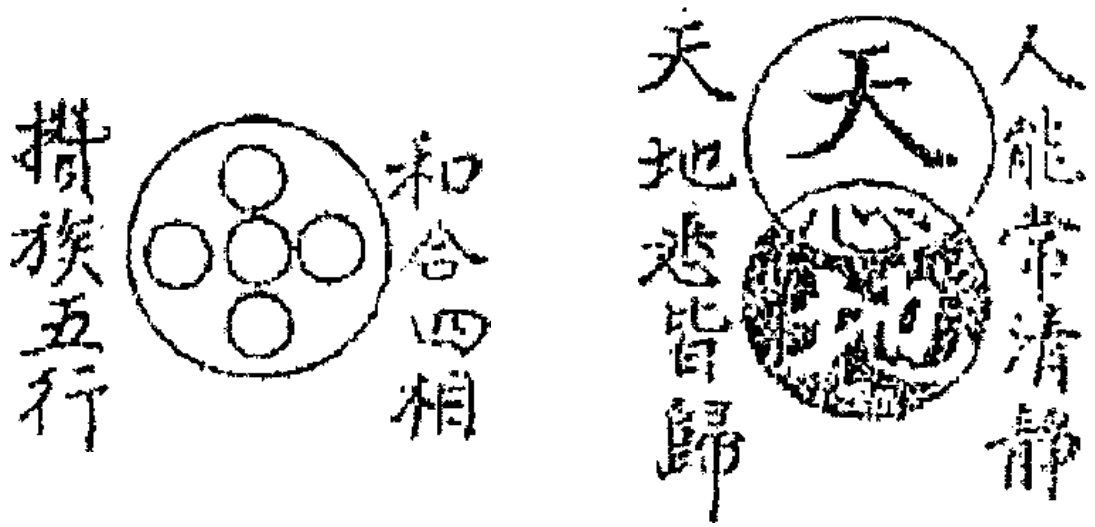


The second method deals with stabilizing the "body": this refers not only to the human body but also to the larger organism and the universe. Ultimately, who leads this? What exactly is the process of practice? The *Qingjing jing* has another chart, shown in the bottom left diagram. Here we see an empty space that is yet not empty, but extremely well balanced. So, when we gather the five phases, the four emblems also match. The human body must achieve this high level as described in the text.

> Keep on stabilizing until
> Heaven is heaven, earth is earth,
> Humanity is humanity, the head is the head,
> The abdomen is the abdomen,
> The chest is the chest, the heart is the heart.

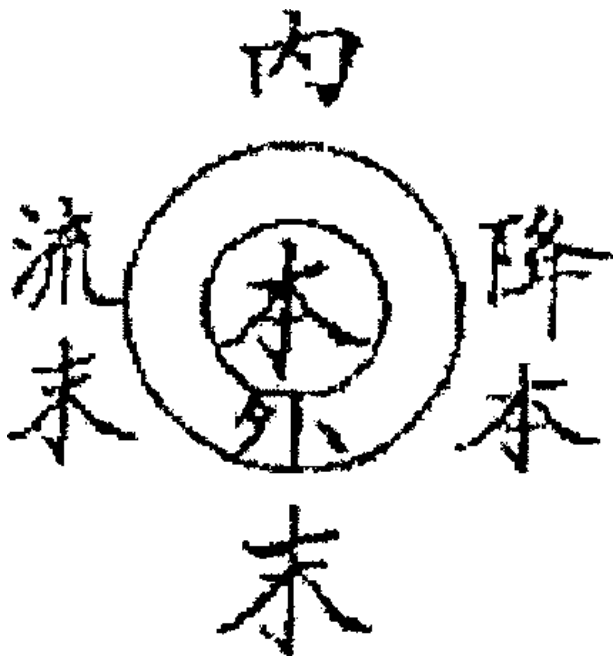
As shown in the bottom right diagram, the second method of stabilizing the body has been effective and it is all complete. However, this is hard to achieve. Attracting immortality is not easy. In the past, adepts, once they entered the hall, first had to pay their respects to heaven and earth, then to the ancestral teachers. The purpose of this was to concentrate their minds on one objective rather than think about many things. This, too, is not easy.

The chart below shows the process that leads from the human to the celestial body. After you get this far, you again transit from the celestial to the human body. For this, it is important to empty yourself, thus the chart on the left shows an empty space that is yet not empty, but extremely well balanced, representing the gathering of the five phases. Stabilize the body until your have clear roots and branches, inner and outer dimension. Make sure to meet this standard as shown in the chart below, which also appears in the *Qingjing jing*. Keep on with the process until the pores as well as the interior of the body begin to move. They usually move together.



This may feel like a very slight breathing through the nose. Once the pores move, the standard is accomplished. However, it is important to pay attention and make sure that the pores of the whole body are moving, rather than just in one part: only one part moving is not good enough.

The following chart shows the rhythm of ascent and descent. Descent means birth; flow means completion; the root indicates death; the branches represent function. Once you get this far with the second method, you are done stabilizing the body. Now you can move on to the third method, where you will revert the direction of the senses to look and listen inside in alignment with ordinary respiration and once more begin to steady the breath.



How to Stabilize the Body

Stabilizing the body is a method that involves operating the entire body: while sitting, the waist acts as the axis on which it rotates. As you move your waist, shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, head, spine, and so on, relax and tighten them in turns. First make a conscious effort to relax, and soon the entire body releases. Also, as you move, let the body become soft, flexible, and loose, then do not move a single joint. The sitting base is stable, the spine is erect and straight. Keep the upper body relaxed and the lower body tight. Make sure to close both eyes peacefully and look inside. Always steady the breath and calm spirit. As you inhale, envision the *qi* coming into the body through the pores from the end of the earth, from all four sides and eight directions. As you exhale, intend to release the *qi* from the body's interior through the pores into all four sides and eight directions. Thus the Heavenly Net is set perfectly, and the body is stable.

There is much more to this method, since it connects to the practice of the Three Immortals and has close links with the *Lingbao bifa*. But you have to master it first, otherwise you cannot move on. This is because the text does not require the entire body to move but only a small part, nor does the silent circulation of the five phases.

3rd Method: No Seeing, No Hearing

When closing your eyes during practice, you should perceive nothing in your eyes: we call this no seeing. You should not hear the sounds of the myriad beings, either. However, since the ears are the place where spirit enters the body, this is impossible. Therefore, you should be able to hear but not let it reach the heart-and-mind, which remains motionless and as spirit stays calm: this is no hearing.

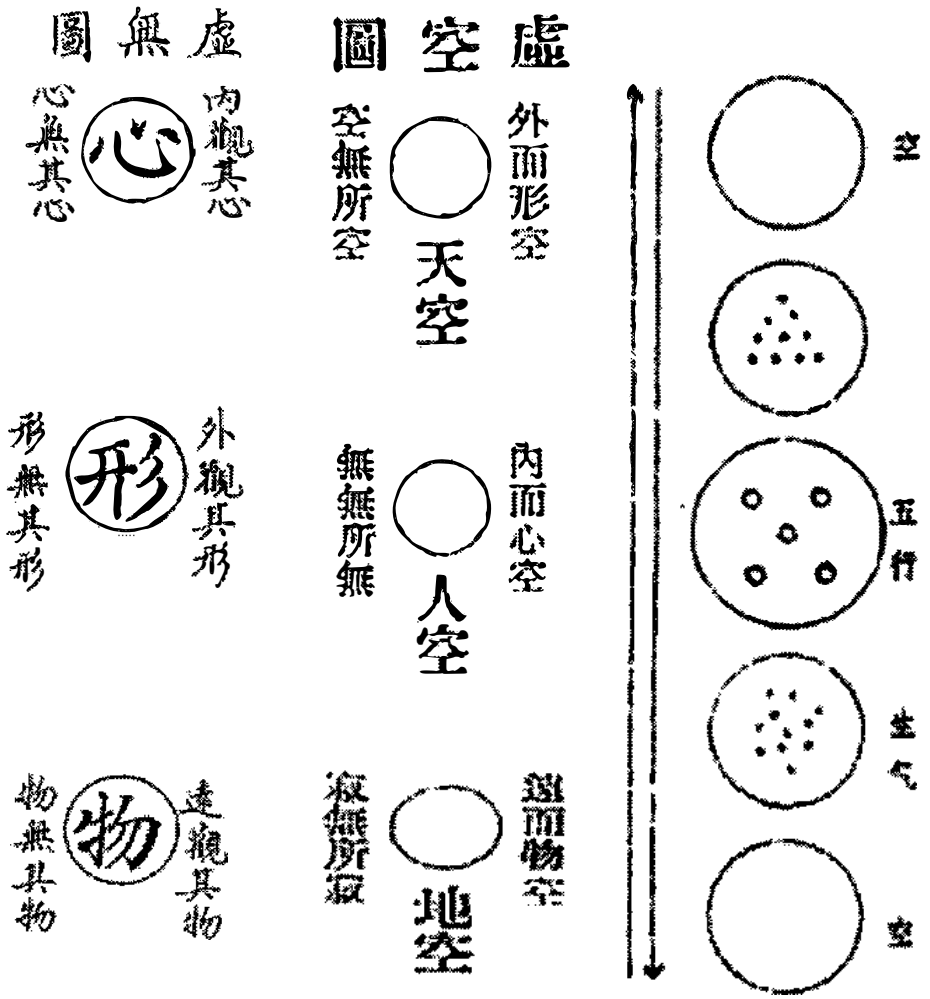
Explanation

1. First listen to your own heartbeat; second, listen to the heart of Dao (empty space); third, listen to heart of heaven (the universe). Thus, you move from two to three dimensions. By no seeing and no hearing, you can control the ears.

> When the eyes do not see, spirit soul stays in the liver.
> When the ears do not hear, essence stays in the kidneys.
> When the tongue does not taste, spirit stays in the heart.
> When the nose does not smell, the material soul stays in the lungs.
> When the four limbs do not move, intention stays in the spleen.

Therefore it is said: "The five *qi* move toward the prime." These words are part of a chart in the *Qingjing jing*. All Daoist practices start from here, never departing from it. If they depart from it, they are not Daoist practices. The chart shows how during practice the inner organs relate to with the external orifices and how the latter match spirit and intention.

Great Dao is formless,
It gives birth to heaven and earth.
Great Dao is without feelings,
It moves the sun and moon.
Great Dao is nameless,
It constantly gives birth to the myriad beings.



Dao takes shape from nonbeing and has no materiality, yet it changes and manifests in three states: nameless, without feeling, and formless. The terms emptiness and nonbeing describe the fundamental idea of the movement of the celestial bodies and the transformation of the myriad beings. Here is the *Xuwu*

tu (Chart of Emptiness and Nonbeing) and *Xukong tu* (Chart of Emptiness and Open Space).

The preceding diagram is the ultimate result of the methods of wisdom and potential plus those of attracting immortality. It shows the cultivation process from bottom to top. When you start your practice, close your eyes and look toward the horizon, using your intention to see. After looking for a long time, you might see something bright or possibly an object. In fact, what you see is only a scene in your mind, which in reality is "a thing without a thing." Similarly, when you close your eyes and see an image, it is in fact, "a form without a form." When your practice gets better, you can also look inside to see what is in your heart. However, in reality, your eyes are not seeing anything, so we speak of "a mind without a mind." However, when the heart you see is really a heart, the practice has at last born fruit.

In no-mind and no-things, there is also no form.
Thus you can meet the old masters from before.
However, one thing still remains:
It is the red sand (elixir) gathering in the numinous terrace (heart).

Things, shapes, and the mind are all empty, so there is nothing to seek. At this time, leap into the greater universe, then take a look at people, affairs, and things. This is really interesting: all outer forms are empty. When you get to the point of "emptiness without emptiness," you can really see through the world. This is most excellent. The chart, from bottom to top, depicts the direction of life as one naturally develops and grows. That is, from emptiness to life-destiny, on to full existence through the five phases, and finally to the last stage of decline and a return to emptiness. Going from top to bottom, it shows the stages of painstaking practice, how you make the aging body gradually return to life, reach a stage when yin-yang and the five phases are full of vitality, then move on to emptiness and nonbeing and attain the ultimate state of free and easy wandering.

2. The practices utilize all ten major body orifices of brightness: the eyes, ears, nostrils, plus the mouth are the seven upper orifices. In addition, there are the front and rear genitals, i.e., the bottom orifices, plus the navel in the middle. This makes a total of ten. This number is fixed and cannot change. If there is an extra orifice, it is abnormal; and if one is lacking, the body is incomplete. Women practicing alchemy have one more orifices. To match the men, they should seal the Iron Swing Doors. Once this is done, they can also seal the lower two orifices, dividing them into upper and lower halfmoon spheres and matching yin and yang.

The orifices of brightness connect to the inner organs. Thus, the liver opens through the eyes and the kidneys open through the ears. The ears, moreover, communicate with the heart, and when you move down during practice,

the kidneys become the furnace, serving to assist the merging of water and fire. Thus they communicate with the heart. The heart itself opens through the tongue, and in practice it goes back and forth to the kidneys. The lungs open through the nose, and the spleen opens through the mouth. The acupuncture points that open outward in the four limbs do not leak when the limbs do not move. At this point, the intention stays in the spleen and the five phases recover their center. The orifices that have the least positive relation to the organs are the eyes and ears with the heart, plus the heart and tongue with the kidneys. Water and fire assist each other as they are located in the heart and kidneys. Kidney *qi* rises, heart fire sinks, going back and forth, to eventually return to the Wuji position above earth.

This represents one step of "five *qi* moving toward the prime." When the five phases recover their center and the four limbs do not move, the orifices of brightness are firm and stable. Once they have stabilized, you can use them to steady the inner organs. That is, you use a small section (the ancients called this the subtle spot) to steady big movements. You only need to steady a small piece of the orifice to generate rather large movements in the inner organs, and thereby achieve the purpose of stabilizing them. For example, in the training process, when you feel the heart getting nervous, immediately check your tongue to see whether its tip touches the upper palate. Also, if the heart is not well, shake the tongue and especially its tip, wriggle your fingers and especially their tips. This will give you relief. Also, in training make your adjustments slowly, first finding the most susceptible orifices, which matches the weak link in your inner organs.

3. The three methods discussed so far are arts undertaken with guiding instructions and practiced under specific guidance. Guiding instructions divide into three types. The first is when a master leads his disciples, known as enlightened guidance. (Nowadays when we speak of "famous masters and superb disciples," this goes back to this.) That is, a teacher explains to you how to do it. The second type is called self-guidance, which means you direct your own practice according to your circumstances. This is completely soundless. Everyone's situation is different, so you guide yourself according to your body's needs, making changes as appropriate. The third type is silent guidance, again ideally soundless, but without any pushing or application of force. You just work as you feel is right for you within your body. Since a recording is not you, nor are you a recording, it is best not to listen to any audio during practice, not use it to determine the length of your sitting and what exactly to do.

4. During the first method as you focus the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation, it is important to deal with distracting thoughts in your head. At this time it is best to practice the methods of wisdom and potential, which combine techniques found in the *Taiyi jinghua zongzhi* and the *Dadan zhizhi.* They will help you manage various problems. So, how to deal with distracting

thoughts? In fact, all you need to do is to quiet down a bit, let yourself sink down and submerge in the practice, and as you do so, each part of you sinks and returns to its place. After dealing with distracting thoughts, you may not be sitting as upright and your meditation cushion may feel all wrong.

If you practice well, you may come to be extremely sensitive to the point where you can feel even one hair under your meditation cushion. You may feel uncomfortable, as if something is pressing into you. Also, pay attention to the area of the lower three yin: sometimes it may feel as if your buttocks are uneven, or the crack is huge as if pulled apart. At this time be sure to move and stabilize the two sides, so the perineum can be sealed. Once it is sealed, the anus will be sealed too, with only the front genitals among the three lower yin still open. At this time, you can ignore the front genitals, because the entire lower surface is sealed and a single part will not leak. Begin to steady the breath.

4th Method: Containing Seeing and Reversing Hearing

In training, the ideal is for there to be no seeing, no hearing, no thinking, no considering, no giving, no receiving, no within, no without, no thoughts, no desires. However, as you live in the world, the heart-and-mind is activated through the eyes, which keep looking at the myriad things: this is a basic instinct. The eyes clearly see all sorts of things and a multiplicity of affairs. When you meditate deep in the heart, quite possibly you will start thinking and considering, become aware of within and without, have thoughts and desires. This mentation reflects common human emotions, but it is not good for practice. To resolve it, sit properly upright and meditate deep in the heart, contain your seeing and reverse your hearing.

How do you do that? As the heart-and-mind gets active, thoughts arise in the head, always directed outward: ideas and considerations, thoughts and desires. At this point contain your seeing and reverse your hearing. For this, first control your eyes. In the human body, the heart-and-mind gets active because of the eyes, so by closing them you can bring their light inside. Look inside at the orifices of *qi* that form the prime link to your body universe: the pores. They are the first and foremost orifices of *qi*; they form their own universe. The body's skin has 84,000 pores in constant communication with heaven and earth, continuous interaction with yin and yang, vital for all energy exchange.

Practice and think "stem *qi,* cosmic *qi,*" reflecting the postnatal and prenatal. As you exhale, see primordial *qi* go out, "stem *qi,* cosmic *qi*." As you inhale, primordial *qi* comes in, "stem *qi,* cosmic *qi*." Inhale and focus it in the body, drawing it into your body universe. Exhale and release it outside, pushing it into the prenatal universe. Repeat this many times, ensuring a vivid energy exchange between your body and the outside world.

Explanation

1. "Containing seeing and reversing hearing" means to look inside and gradually transform ordinary respiration into perfect breathing by repeatedly steadying the breath. In fact, this is one way to steady the breath. Once all is well steadied, practice pore breathing: as you inhale through the pores, make the body focus on itself so it contracts to be very small; as you exhale, release it so it expands. However, make sure the body remains immobile. Steady yourself until you feel the pores are breathing, then let the body synchronize with their movement. When the pores open wider, hold the breath, neither inhale nor exhale, and see if there is any internal breathing. As the pores are inhaling and exhaling (opening and closing), the body becomes an open space: it is empty. At this time, if you abruptly hold the breath and notice that the inside is still breathing, we speak of the internal circulation of breath. This is the first step, and also a stage in the firing process. To get to the first step, steady the breath at the nostrils, feeling the head empty above: this is called the head space. The second step happens during pore breathing as you close the pores from the inside: this is called the body space. Once the body is empty, you can turn your vision inward.

2. To contain your seeing, let the eyes look ahead, then reverse direction and look inside to see if the body is empty. The situation you perceive on the inside should be different. At this time, also reverse your hearing to listen inside. This means first, to listen to your heartbeat and the sounds in the body, which practically means the heartbeat. At times, this happens naturally. Second, it indicates to listen to the sounds of Dao. Third, it refers to listening only to the heartbeat: When the body is empty, you can hear movement on the inside. Listening to the heart is like perceiving it hanging in space—opening and closing. Daoists say that it is like a flower blooming, referring to the heart opening. On the one hand, the heart is beating; on the other hand, it is opening and closing. If it skips and jumps, there will be an internal sound like a pop, then something may appear and jump up. If you are strong enough, it may even jump as far as the head; if you are not so strong, it may just make it to the mouth, which means you notice something there. If this then moves down from the mouth, make sure to take note. Also, can you stop it in the process?

You want to stop it because, if it continues down, it will fall to the bottom. So, find a way to stop it and wait for something from below to move up. After it stops and if something does move up, we speak of yin and yang intersecting. At this time you need to pay attention, since two modes become possible: desires and no feelings or desires and emotions. When yin and yang intersect and there are desires but no feelings, we speak of yin and yang meeting; when there are emotions and also desires, we speak of the meeting of the perfect husband and wife. But what if nothing rises up?

This happens because, as described in the section on perfect breathing, as you inhale, ideally *qi* should move past the navel and reach the lower field, but

it does in fact not do so. A large portion ends up either in the bladder or in the opening of life and death. If it gets to the latter, no matter your age, twice practice to augment yang fire and reduce yin tokens, then twice run the cycle (heavenly circuit). You have to control the heat. Younger people will have enough strength to run the cycles often, but the elderly can only turn it two or three times.

4. When ordinary people close their eyes, they may not see anything, but their eyes still produce illusions, images that have form but no substance. They think that what appears to them are real people and objects, so it is very difficult to tell them that they are not in fact seeing anything. What you see comes from your thoughts, following a specific process. Any time you conceive of a scene, it originates from your body universe. Closing the eyes eliminates your ability to see outside, however, Daoists say you can still see shapes and images within the body, including those of people.

So, in a state of no thinking, no considering, no within, no without, no thoughts, no desires, if you still see things, they are constructed by yourself. For example, "spirit" is not commonly in a state of inspiration but rather one of illusion, and naturally manifests scenes and things. If you want to see things, and want to see them clearly, you cannot avoid illusionary perception. For example, if you see your skeleton, try looking at it clearly, then see beyond it and ask yourself what is at its root and what is left when you let go of illusion. Do not be afraid, because all these perceptions and unruly things just come from your brain.

5. While undergoing purification during sitting in meditation, make sure to listen being very, very still. The highest form here is listening to the sounds of Dao. Dao originally has no sound or echo, yet you can still hear it. Dao most definitely exists, it gave birth to the earth and generated humanity, so why shouldn't you hear it? Therefore, in the process of purification, it is most important to listen for any sound Dao may make. While sitting in meditation, listen for anything that seems to make sound while moving. What is it telling you? Maybe as it moves, it sounds lovely. Gradually you start to smile. So, if you listen, listen for the sound of Dao; if you cannot hear it, it is because spirit is galloping around outside: you can hear it only as long as spirit is inside.

After your body turns into its own universe, you can in fact hear all sorts of sounds. Even if you cannot hear the sounds of Dao, you should be able to hear someone else's breathing or the heat surrounding them. If you cannot hear that, start by listening to the people around you moving or to someone walking. These are also sounds of Dao, walking about being one example. If you cannot hear even that, try to listen for the sound of your heart, listen for it beating: that is its sound. In the process of purification, the main thing is to listening for sound, so sooner or later you will hear something.

After getting more adept in the first few methods, the length of time you are able to sit will naturally increase and your legs will stop hurting. If your breath is well steadied, there won't be any pain in the legs. So, first steady the relationship between the breath and the body, making it firm and steady, then your legs will no longer hurt and the *qi* will arrive.

6. To contain seeing is moving the eyes from the outside in. The first step is to retrieve spirit light from the distance, placing it at the edge of your body universe (about one arm's length in front of you) The second step is to move it from the outside in, focusing spirit light in the body, and with its help looking inward at the first great opening of your body universe, that is, the pores. Every moment, the pores are exchanging prenatal and postnatal *qi* with heaven and earth, moving in perfect alignment with yin and yang.

To contain seeing and reverse hearing you must control the eyes. Use the pores of the entire body to breathe: inhale and bring primordial *qi* in and let it transform into stem *qi*; exhale and let primordial *qi* go out, letting it complete this transformation. With each inhalation, focus primordial *qi* in the body, letting it pervade your entire body universe. With each exhalation, release stem *qi* outside. Without any particular intention, let it merge with the prenatal universe. Do one round, then repeat until it becomes your natural way of breathing.

The first step to reverse hearing is listening to the human heart, that is, to your own heartbeat. The second step is listening to the heart of Dao, that is, to the vibrations of earth. The third step is listening to the heart of heaven, that is, to the vibrations of the universe.

5th Method: Steadying Ordinary Respiration

In order to steady breathing and quiet spirit, you must meditate deep in the heart. The heart is the home of spirit, which is beyond any imaginations and the myriad karmic conditions. So make every effort to reach a state of no thinking, no considering, no thoughts, no desires, striving in your practice to get to a point where on the outside there are no things, on the inside there is no mind. Getting deep into the heart's breath serves to give you stability in sitting. This is the first barrier, the barrier to sitting. As you work your way through this barrier, there are no specific stillness practices. Rather, you have to follow the guided instructions.

Explanation

1. Working to steady ordinary respiration means to breathe naturally and with full concentration, so that on the outside there are no things, on the inside there is no heart-and-mind. As you close your eyes, this "heart-and-mind" is the mind that roams outside the body and not the inner organ of the heart. The mind being free from self, thoughts, and considerations, you can sit upright and

direct your consciousness into your body universe. Do not think about anything else, but listen to your own heartbeat, to the breathing of you heart, all the while breathing naturally. If you do not utilize ordinary respiration properly, you will never make it to perfect breathing.

2. Containing seeing and reversing hearing while steadying ordinary respiration. Containing seeing means to let the eyes first look forward and out, then gradually pull them back in. Again, let them look forward and out, then pull them back, focusing the vision in the brain to look at it from the inside. Maybe you find a tiny light there, which helps you to steady the ordinary breath. To do so, inhale and exhale steadily through the nose. Here *qi* can flow along three paths, so when you next inhale, start moving it down.

At first the ordinary breath is unlikely to move down, as consciousness is located in the lower part of the head. While inhaling and exhaling, make sure that ears, eyes, mouth, and nose all participate. Ultimately you want all the pores in the head to breathe.

This means that the pores of the head move along with the breath: inhale, and the pores contract, exhale, and they expand. If the head breathing goes well, if you turn your vision back to look inside, there is no seeing. Yet as you no longer see things on the outside, you start to see inside, and what you see is very much like a big open space. From here, slowly move the intention down, all the way to the lower field. Inhale softly and focus it in the lower abdomen.

3. The process of slowly moving the intention down is like appeasing a baby. To do it well, you must be closely familiar with the guided instructions. Let the head lower slightly, let the intention move down slowly. Repeat these sentences frequently as you move it down a bit, move it down some more, move it down slowly, move it down to the lower field. Otherwise it cannot reach there. Once there, inhale and softly focus it in the lower abdomen, continuously nurturing this womb, which now houses what has arrived from above, something that contains yang within yin.

4. In the process of moving it down to the lower field, first make sure it does not go into the bladder; second, do not let it go to the opening of life and death (the perineum); and third keep it away from the grain road, because if it gets there, it will be discharged through the anus. The best way to prevent these three possibilities is to use the method of "cultivating freedom from leakage." From this perspective, all twelve methods of attracting immortality should be explained together, as opposed to teaching them one at a time, which is not good. Don't worry whether the breath reaches the front genitals, the bone pathways, or the perineum. But always on inhalation slightly lift up the anus and contract the front genitals and lower abdomen, so it keeps on rising into the lower field.

5. Once you feel the stem *qi* has reached the lower field, inhale into the lower abdomen, increasing the force of its movements little by little. The pur-

pose of this is to find the energy line of the lower field. Each inhalation should lead to a movement in the lower abdomen. When the lower field starts to feel warm, add pore breathing and seal the pores. Inhale and imagine the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions pressing into the pores of the body. The entire body will start to move at this point, all kinds of breathing happening simultaneously, not one by one. Now also practice internal breathing. As you inhale, move the *qi* down past the navel; as you exhale, let it rise but not beyond the heart.

If you feel that the pores are contracting and expanding along with the breathing, you can increase the subtlety by gently stopping the breathing. Do not exhale or inhale to see whether the pores move. If you notice the pores subtly moving, actively inhaling and exhaling, you are successful. With the pores now moving, inhale to move *qi* down past the navel, exhale and let it rise but not beyond the heart. From here, once more add internal breathing and conclude by sinking it into the lower field.

6. Ordinary respiration is natural breathing. To steady it the first thing you do is inhale as you get deep into the heart's breath. Keep in mind the general rules of breathing: it must be natural at all times, each exhalation and inhalation soft, even, long, and regular. If you are able to sit well, focus your conscious mind on your body universe and listen to your heartbeat, which gets you deep into the heart's breath. If you cannot sit well, first use your intention to control the breath. You are still inhaling as you try to get deep into the heart's breath. Take control with some force as you think of your own heartbeat. This is called martial fire.

In attracting immortality, this is the first barrier, the barrier of sitting. The purpose of getting deep into the heart's breathing is to improve your sitting. This barrier does require total stillness, so if you cannot stay still, just follow the guided instructions.

6th Method: Calming Spirit in Three Steps[1]

To contain seeing and reverse hearing, the tongue must not move. As and when the tongue remains immobile, spirit arises. Spirit resides in the heart, and the heart belongs to the trigram Qian, while the body belongs to Kun. Therefore it is called the cauldron of heaven and earth. The heart's orifice of brightness is through the tongue, which is its sprout. It also stores spirit. This means, when the tongue is immobile, the heart is calm, and when the heart is calm, spirit arises. To imagine that the heart-and-mind is not moving, the first step is to have the tongue touch the upper palate.

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[1] The ancients called this Regulating the Tongue in Three Steps.

As the body of the tongue is immobile, your heart is stable; once your heart is stable, spirit arises. For spirit to arise and be stable, you need to focus it, and the mechanism to do so lies with the eyes. The heart-and-mind also connects to the ears, which means they hold another mechanism of spirit activation. Make sure that your heart-and-mind is stable, so that spirit can arise. To reach this state, you must reverse your hearing, that is, focus spirit in the ears from the outside to the inside and internally listen to perfect breathing. As perfect breathing arises, so does spirit; to allow spirit to arise and be stable, the tongue has to be immobile.

How to Calm Spirit

When the tongue is immobile, spirit arises. Spirit is the master of the heart-and-mind, which serves as its residence. The heart matches the trigram Qian, while the body matches Kun. Therefore, it is called the cauldron of heaven and earth. The heart's orifice of brightness is through the tongue, which lives in the mouth and serves as the sprout of the heart—the residence of spirit. Therefore, as the tongue is immobile, the heart-and-mind is calm, and this allows spirit to arise. To imagine that the heart-and-mind is not moving, the first step is to have the tongue touch the upper palate, keeping it there without moving. This causes the heart-and-mind to be stable and spirit to be calm. More specifically, there are three ways of calming spirit:

1. If you are unable to sit still continuously during practice, start by examining your tongue and see whether it has dropped down and no longer touches the upper palate. Once the tongue touches the upper palate, the heart should immediately return to normal. Holding it there without moving will calm spirit.

2. To calm spirit, you must close your eyes. As you sit down to practice, first close your eyes and do not open them again. The eyes orifice is through the liver. If you open your eyes during practice, the liver will release excessive yang. Since the liver opens through the eyes, it radiates straight out, which is hard to bear. To calm spirit, therefore, you must close your eyes. In addition, the eyes are the opening where spirit enters the body. When both eyes look inside, spirit can arise, and to allow for this to happen, you must focus it. If, with your eyes looking inside, you cannot see the heart or if the heart becomes panicky, make to connect the tongue to the palate and keep it immobile. Close your eyes and internally examine the edges of your body universe, then check out the edges of your entire body to see whether there is motion anywhere and particularly in the four limbs.

Once the four limbs move, the intention sits in the spleen, and you cannot calm spirit. Observe and examine your body universe, making sure the eyes do not look outside and your heart-and-mind is stable. Make the eyes look down: this is key. Let them look straight forward, then down, then up, just to see what difference this makes. Next look to the left and right to see how this

changes things. In case you open two meridians, maybe the eyes look to the left, both eyeballs moving left and up—this is a technique very useful when you work with the five phases and their meridians. The eyes can move randomly, but every movement connects with something else in the body. When they do not look outside, your heart is stable and your spirit can be calm.

This also means that as soon the body moves, the heart has no stability and spirit cannot be calm. If the four limbs move and the intention sits in the spleen, spirit cannot be calm either. Keep your eyes from looking outside so your heart gets to be stable, and once your heart is stable, your spirit is calm.

3. Once your heart is stable and spirit starts to arise, make sure to focus it. Spirit can only arise after the heart is stable and settled. The mechanism to focus spirit, moreover, is in the ears, actually it is in the ears and eyes. To get your heart to be stable and spirit to arise, by all means contain seeing and reverse hearing. This means, get your eyes to look at your heart and have your ears listen to the heartbeat. Letting spirit arise and focusing it leads to calmness, filling out its yin side and brightening its yang aspect.

Explanation

1. The first five methods of attracting immortality do not lead to calming spirit but work to steady body, consciousness, and intention, so you can focus the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation and can steady the upper and lower halfmoon spheres. Steadying the body means steadying the four main senses, gathering the five phases, and allowing the five *qi* to move toward the prime. All this eventually forms an interior universe. All this does not go beyond the diagram in the *Qingjing jing*.

2. To get a handle on people, affairs, and things, the first step is to have the eyes look at the heart and the ears listen to it. The second step is to cultivate the heart of Dao; the third is to cultivate the heart of heaven. At this time people move and breathe together with the universe. In other words, use the ears to lead spirit from outside to inside and listen internally to perfect breathing. Once perfect breathing arise, it generates spirit.

7th Method: Steadying Perfect Breathing

Once you have steadied ordinary respiration, you can move on steady perfect breathing. Perfect breathing does not work with the air as it passes through mouth and nose as in ordinary people, which is what we call ordinary respiration. Hence we say: stop ordinary respiration to allow perfect breathing to get active. That is, ordinary respiration through mouth and nose stops, no air comes in or goes out. Perfect breathing arises on the inside, and stem *qi* circulates in your body universe. As you inhale, stem *qi* sinks down past the navel and reaches the lower field; as you exhale, it rises up but not beyond the heart.

Use ordinary respiration to lead into perfect breathing. With this rather short practice you naturally find serenity and inner stability. Thus, you can reverse your hearing and listen to your perfect breathing. You will not hearing anything. As the ears do not hear, the kidneys generate essence. You can then transform essence into stem *qi,* change stem *qi* into spirit, and return spirit to emptiness. This is called gathering the three flowers at the top of the head.

How to Practice

Perfect breathing does not work through the mouth and nose, but is stem *qi* moving within the body. Ordinary respiration happens outside; perfect breathing, inside. Ordinary people's breathing is called respiration. It stops when perfect breathing is activated. This means, once ordinary respiration stops, with no air flowing in or out, perfect breathing will arise in the body. When perfect breathing is activated, perfect *qi* is set in motion. The steps of stabilizing perfect breathing are:

The first step: Use ordinary respiration to lead to perfect breathing. Ordinary respiration means inhaling and exhaling naturally. Perfect breathing requires first that ordinary respiration is well steadied. Once you get this, immediately change into moving *qi* down past the navel as you inhale and letting it rise, but not beyond the heart, as you exhale. Use ordinary respiration to lead into perfect breathing, and with every breath return to the source.

The second step: As you inhale, focus body and universe, that is, let *qi* from all four sides and eight direction press into the body through its pores. Next, let stem *qi* sink down past the navel (do not control where it is going), mainly making sure it moves along the destiny-cultivation line. Focus body and universe, let *qi* from all four sides and eight directions press into the body through its pores. As you inhale, let stem *qi* sink down past the navel; as you exhale, let it rise but not above the heart. In other words, when you exhale stem *qi* from your universe, release it into all four sides and eight directions while simultaneously moving the stem *qi* up, but not above the heart. Here you work with a double intention: make sure to grasp this concept well.

The third step: As you inhale, let stem *qi* sink down past the navel to reach the lower field. Focus body, organism, and universe, and let *qi* from all four sides and eight directions press into the body through all its pores. As you exhale, release it outward, allowing it to flow into all four sides and eight directions, forming a round sphere. As you inhale, let stem *qi* move down past the navel to reach the lower field (where you still have not installed the furnace or set up the cauldron). As you exhale, let it rise up but not above the heart. Right here, the energy path enters the Twelve-storied Tower (big or small: the big tower is the twelve ribs; the small tower is the twelve joints).

Steadying perfect breathing should be done twenty-four times. One inhale and one exhale make one round; ideally you spend about two minutes on each round.

As you inhale, let stem *qi* move down past the navel to reach the lower field. As you exhale, let it rise up, but not above the heart. With this rather short practice you naturally find serenity and inner stability. To cultivate perfection, listen to your perfect breathing. You will not hear anything. As the ears do not hear, the kidneys generate essence (that is, its source is here). Transform essence into stem *qi,* change stem *qi* into spirit, return spirit to emptiness. This is called gathering the three flowers at the top of the head. The ultimate purpose of this practice is to gather the three flowers at the top of the head.

Explanation

1. Be sure to steady your breathing well, so it is natural, soft, even, and long. The old statement, "always having desires you can observe its opening" (*Daode jing* 1) means to consciously think about guiding stem *qi* down below the navel when inhaling, and letting it rise but not beyond the heart when exhaling. This is called martial fire. The area below the navel is called the lower abdomen. The whole practice uses ordinary respiration to lead into perfect breathing. As soon as there is a small fire, lead it into martial fire. The intention must be sufficient, you must be resolute, and you need the power to penetrate. To do the practice use your intention and make sure it does not rise above the diaphragm, lest it exits from the mouth. It also works to open the lower section of the Conception Vessel.

2. External breathing inhales air from the outside into the body and exhales it back out. Internal breathing means, moving stem *qi* down past the navel upon inhalation and letting it rise up but not beyond the heart upon exhalation. The navel is the tenth major orifice, also used for embryo respiration. For this, you activate the two points in the navel that mutually press against each other for support. After birth, once the umbilical cord is severed, these two points become immobile. Thus, in embryo respiration it is important to recover these two points. To do so you use ordinary respiration to lead into perfect breathing, then steady perfect breathing.

3. First turn ordinary respiration into internal perfect breathing. Use natural breathing through the mouth and nose to allow the stem *qi* to move down past the navel. As you exhale, make sure it does not rise beyond the heart. This is the first step.

The second step is to inhale, guide *qi* into the body and focus it in your universe; as you exhale, release it into all four sides and eight directions. If the there is no pressure from the outside in toward the body, stem *qi* will not reach the lower field.

The third step is to inhale and guide the *qi* down past the navel into the lower field, then exhale and let it rise but not beyond the heart. Make sure there is no pressure in the surrounding area, so the stem *qi* does not go beyond the heart. Exhale and do not let it go beyond the diaphragm. If there is no path to follow, the *qi* will exit through the windpipe. Ultimately it is important to keep it out of the trachea and make sure it only moves inside.

Therefore, when using ordinary respiration to lead into perfect breathing, inhale and contract the area of your body universe, so that there is pressure in the lower area, allowing stem *qi* to reach the lower field. Exhale and expand the area of your body universe, so even if there is some tension in the lower abdomen, *qi* does not exit through the windpipe and keeps on moving on the inside. This one step is not yet complete, since the area above does not yet have a path (line), in other words, you cannot make it through the Twelve-storied Tower. The small heavenly circuit similarly cannot pass through, and if you are having trouble circulating it through it is because the Tower is hard to pass. Master Lü said: Everybody can go through a heavenly circuit. However, typically it takes a month or two for the practice to be successful. Once the power is strong, the Heavenly Eye can be easily opened and closed.

4. Inhale and guide the stem *qi* down past the navel; exhale and let it rise but not beyond the heart. Do twenty-four cycles of this in the course of one hour, using about two minutes per cycle. Elderly people should practice a lot more. Also pay attention that at this time there is no place to hold and do not let your intention get stuck. Set up a secure furnace and install the cauldron to concoct a medicine, which we call the elixir. If you don't know where and how to set it up, relax your intention, lest things become stagnant in your body universe.

5. Even if you have completed this method, you are yet ready for embryo respiration. To successfully practice that, you need to sit in the full lotus position, imitating the posture of an embryo. The first step is pore breathing, and you need to seal your nose, mouth, and ears, effectively blocking all seven upper orifices, plus keep the bottom sealed. In case you breathe again, you are only doing pore breathing. Once the pores are closed, the navel opens. In order to imitate the embryonic state, use navel breathing to get rid of turbid and absorb fresh *qi*: this is called embryo respiration. Without the navel opening it does not happen.

6. Unless you steady perfect breathing, there is no chance for embryo respiration. The purpose of forming a circular area outside the body is to enhance external pressure, which urges the stem *qi* to reach the lower field. Without this step, there can be no field below the navel.

8th Method: Stopping All Leakage

This practice first requires you to control your eyes and ears. Both are places where spirit is stored and transmuted. As the *Caifeng shu* (Book of Plucking the Wind) says:

> Drinking and swallowing incessantly, the body is not light.
> Thinking and planning incessantly, the stem *qi* is not clear.
> If sounds and colors never stop, the heart is not at peace.
> If desire and thoughts never cease, spirit has no life force.

As you contain seeing and reverse hearing, the heart-and-mind does not get active and without it, no thoughts can arise. So during sitting meditation, your eyes must not look at the myriad things, the ears must not listen to any sound or tones, your heart-and-mind must not plan the myriad affairs. With every moment, revert the light inward and turn back tones, thus breathing naturally. Every breath returns to the root. The primordial spirit naturally guards the great energy cavern that is your body, and you gain stability in body and mind. At this time make sure:

> The spirit soul stays in the liver, so there is no leakage from the eyes.
> The material soul stays in the lungs, so there is no leakage from the nose.
> Spirit stays in the heart, so there is no leakage from the mouth.
> Essence stays in the kidneys, so there is no leakage from the ears.
> Intention stays in the spleen, so there is no leakage from the crevices and orifices of the four limbs.

This is what we mean when we say, "no leakage." Master Lü said: "Cultivate a body with no leakage."

Explanation

1. Setting out to practice, first control the eyes and ears, use ordinary respiration to lead to perfect breathing. After that, seal the three lower yin orifices (the front and back genitals plus the perineum). For the front genitals, men have to seal the mechanism of the secret tunnel, women have to seal the Iron Swing Doors. Squeeze the buttocks, so that the anus cannot release *qi* from the body and seal the perineum. In ancient times, the perineum was called the "opening of life and death;" here all yin channels meet and two meridians go directly from here to Bubbling Spring.

2. Once the three lower yin orifices are sealed, the body's stem *qi* transforms very fast, especially if you draw out bone marrow doing team practice, moving it up from the legs and into the back, notably if the legs are particularly

painful. The purpose of this is to quickly move the heavenly circuit. There are two routes for pulling marrow up the legs and into the back, but you may get a spasm up one side, in which case you cannot complete it. At this time, keep motionless: ideally it remains completely immobile. Also, keep the upper seven orifices from moving, lest the internal organs start to move. Just stand firm with the pain. The pain here is different from ordinary pain, since both the main and collateral channels plus the heavenly circuit are traveling very fast. Just use the sealing technique. Once it is sealed, *qi* transforms quickly.

9th Method: Inward Looking and Reverse Hearing

With body and mind firmly settled, start to practice inward looking and reverse hearing. For this, look inside to see your body universe. Use the five phases as the foundation—water, wood, fire, earth, metal, and then back to water—as they circulate in the generating cycle. Absorbed deep in the heart, silently meditate on the kidneys, liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and again kidneys, moving around the full cycle. To circulate the five phases in the generating cycle in your body universe, you must concentrate spirit in serene reflection.

Master Lü said: "To cultivate a body with no leakage, you practice the technique of no leaking. This involves looking inward, followed closely by reverse hearing. Both are needed to circulate the five phases."

Once your body and mind are settled, start to silently circulate the five phases. Follow the order of kidneys, liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys in your body universe, matching the generating cycle. Thereby you can transform essence into stem *qi* and change stem *qi* into something visible, although of different shapes. In the old days, this was called an inner scene. You can see people, phenomena, things, and scenes vivid and lifelike. As your skills get better, the scenes and images will change, wondrous beyond description. Also, when stem *qi* moves, it produces sounds, which can serve as chants and spells. In the old days, they were called emitted tones.

They come in nine types of perfect *qi,* each with its own ability. On the inside, it may sound like a bird but once emitted to the outside, it is just panting. Today, the widely known Six Healing Sounds come from this. Stem *qi* further coagulates and becomes liquid, which gets circulated and turns into an elixir: this is known as elixir circulation. Internally it moves along on hidden lines, but externally it connects to the seven orifices. Steady the orifices of brightness, and the inner organs will respond: we call this subtle and wondrous. Steady the hidden orifices, and the seven orifices will stabilize each other: we call this clever and wondrous. This principle is summarized as "orifices, oh clever orifices—so subtle and so wondrous!"

Inward looking and reverse hearing in your body universe, the five phases generating each other are wondrous deep within. Transforming essence into

stem *qi,* hundreds of symbols are born; keep the desire of announcing your achievement silent, only observe and concentrate spirit.

Explanation

1. The silent circulation of the five phases divides into three types: The first type involves using your hands to issue some sort of energy as you push the *qi* through the five organs in circulation. The second type is without hands, instead relying on the power of the teacher's guidance to lead the *qi*. You just close your eyes and think about how you want push it forward and circulate it. The third type uses outside pressure, with the teacher pushing your five phases into circulation. When you work with the first, use your hands to silently circulate the five phases, pulling and moving your inner organs, make sure to press in and pull out consistently. You press in, then circulate that part: it works as a method of self-recovery. Combining this with energy balancing, you will start to have the power to penetrate the body which soon leads to the capacity to circulate the five phases.

2. When following the teacher's guidance, split the different areas, working on one part each day. Decide which one depending on the height and color of the light radiating from the top of your head. If a yellow color appears, proceed toward the stomach; if red color appears, pull and move the heart. If you have heart disease, move your fingertips rapidly to steady it quickly.

10th Method: Concentrating Spirit in Serene Reflection

In this practice, to concentrate spirit means that it enters through the *qi* points, then let it circulate through your body universe. Serene reflection means no thoughts arise in your mind, your heart's radiance never diminishes, your body is unmoving, and your physical form and the greater organism of life are in harmony. To concentrate spirit in serene reflection, steady the breath and refine spirit, steady the body and refine the physical form. You use perfect breathing to do this, which is not done by breathing through mouth and nose. Your object, moreover, is primordial spirit, which is not spirit in conscious mind and intention that tends to be anxious and worried. Thus, it is said:

To steady the breath, steady the breath of perfect breathing.
To refine spirit, refine spirit that is not spirit.
Ordinary respiration stops and perfect breathing starts.
Perfect breathing arises, and internal stem *qi* flows.
Conscious spirit is cut off, and perfect spirit can arise,
Perfect spirit rises, and you can refine primordial spirit.
Yin spirit is complete, and yang spirit arises.
Eyes and mind are empty, and you see your perfect nature.

In other words, as you practice this, you first concentrate spirit, then the primordial spirit arises. When you get there, "you have reached perfection: with eyes closed and mind empty, you see your inner nature." *The Xuanji zhizhi* (Direct Pointers to the Mystery) says, "Concentrating spirit means to focus on the clear heart-and-mind so it can enter it." This means to gather essence and spirit in the orifices of *qi,* so they combine in harmony and never leave. When not even one thought arises, we speak of serenity; when a thought arises and you are aware of it, we speak of reflection. The orifices of *qi* mentioned here are the pores of your body universe.

Explanation

1. The orifices of *qi* here are the pores of your entire body, your body universe. Concentrating spirit, then, means that you consciously enter it through these orifices into the entire body. Serene reflection is when the body and physical form do not move. To concentrate spirit in serene reflection, steady the breath, refine spirit, steady the body, and refine the physical form. Therefore, it is said: To steady the breath you need to steady the breath of perfect breathing; to refine spirit, refine spirit that is not spirit. Spirit that is not spirit is the spirit of no-spirit, as we say repeatedly.

To steady perfect respiration, inhale and guide the *qi* down past the navel, then exhale and let it rise but not above the heart. Use ordinary respiration to lead to perfect breathing. Once you train this far, it is quite possible that the primordial spirit will appear, and with perfect respiration this is even more likely. It may also feel as if you are not breathing yourself. Once ordinary respiration stops, perfect breathing will kick in. This is the first step. At this time, you may well sit with your legs painfree. In ancient times, they said that this is the time when the steady line appears, and you can sit for long periods.

2. If you usually sit for a certain time, such as one hour, now lengthen it and extend it to two. This will move you up a notch. Quite possibly, you find a sensitive point or a weak link, but you can straighten them out as smoothly as climbing a ladder. At this time, the yin spirit may appear, complete with irregular auditory and visual hallucinations. Your consciousness can control them, saying, "I am the emperor, I have final say." If you cannot control them, its best to stop practicing. At this stage, it is also possible that the yang spirit appears.

3. When your practice reaches this level, better not be exposed to the outside and do not let others see you, especially the division of the two palms.

4. How should we understand the saying, "to refine spirit, refine spirit that is not spirit"? What you see or think of with the conscious intention that forms part of spirit is artificial. Spirit that is not spirit, on the other hand, controls the unconscious, and the scenes that appear are true. For instance, as you circulate the five phases and arrive at the liver, a disc of blue light may suddenly appear before your eyes: an unconscious state manifests—spirit that is not spirit.

It indicates that the liver is already in a close relationship with the heavenly stems, that is, your body universe is connected with heaven and earth. At this moment, make sure to keep your hands on the liver, constantly moving and transforming it. When the color starts to change, let your hands immediately move to the heart for circulation. This is a method of practicing with spirit that is not spirit.

5. How to explain the statement, "Ordinary respiration stops and perfect breathing starts; perfect breathing arises, and internal stem *qi* flows"? For instance, as you inhale lift stem *qi* from the bladder to the liver, then hold the breath, nourish yourself, and silently recite the chanting formula. At this time, the liver and gall bladder emerge with the movement of internal stem *qi*.: perfect breathing is active. "Conscious spirit is cut off, and perfect spirit will arise," moreover, means that when people stop imagining things, perfect spirit will appear.

11th Method: Listening to and Following the Breath

When stabilizing the breath, it is most important to listen to and follow the breath. The second thing is to realize that the heart-and-mind and the breath depend on each other. That is, perfect breathing starts and ordinary respiration stops, and vice versa. Every breath returns to the root, to the lower field, and is continuously stored. As you exhale, connect with the root of the prime of heaven; as you inhale, connect with the root of the source of earth. As you exhale, do not release the root of heaven from your body universe; as you inhale, absorb the root of earth in your body universe. As you exhale, do not let the *qi* rise above the heart; as you inhale, let it go down past the navel to reach the lower field. As heart-and-mind and breath depend on each other, the mind is not that of ordinary people, but refers to your perfect mind and original organism. The body is the residence of the heart-and-mind, which in turn is the master of the body. Rage and craze in the heart are like a dragon; aggression and hatred in the body are like a tiger. Still, the body also contains a drop of perfect yang *qi*; the heart-and-mind contains a drop of perfect yin essence. Therefore, we speak of two substances.

If you can rest in your perfect heart-and-mind and stay with perfect breathing, then spirit and stem *qi* will naturally depend on each other and join to enter *samadhi* (lit. "great stability"). Master Lü said:

> Concentrate spirit in serene reflection by repeatedly steadying the breath, with all five senses and seven orifices listen to perfect breathing. Listening to and following the breath are most important, thereby the human heart and the heart of Dao come to rely on each other.

Ordinary respiration stops and perfect breathing starts; it keeps on uninterrupted and is entirely unconscious. Perfect breathing stops and ordinary respiration starts; every breath returns to the root and enters the lower field.

The body universe contains heaven and earth; the heart matches heaven, the kidneys match earth. Exhale and let the *qi* enter the root of the prime of heaven; inhale and let the *qi* enter the center of the prime of earth.

Exhale and do not let it rise above the heart; inhale and move it down past navel: this is the perfect principle of steadying the breath. Perfect heart and perfect breathing constantly rely on each other; spirit and stem *qi* depend on each other in *samadhi.*

Explanation

1. The emphasis here is still on the breath. Listen to and follow the breath, concentrate spirit in serene reflection, then once more steady the breathing. Listening to and following the breath are most important; they and the heart-and-mind rely on each other. The two hearts also depend on each other, referring to the human heart and the heart of Dao.

2. "Ordinary respiration stops and perfect breathing starts; it keeps on uninterrupted and is entirely unconscious." At this point, the practice has started to be unconscious, in complete unknowing. To achieve this level, pay attention to the movement of perfect breathing, making sure every breath returns to the root and enters the lower field to establish heaven and earth within your body universe. Now, you can experience the location of the lowest and highest point in your body universe.

3. "The heart matches heaven, the kidneys match earth. Exhale and let the *qi* enter the root of the prime of heaven; inhale and let the *qi* enter the center of the prime of earth. Exhale and do not let it rise above the heart; inhale and move it down past navel: this is the perfect principle of steadying the breath," that you need to steady the breath once more. The purpose again is to let it sink past the navel upon inhalation and letting it rise up, but not above the heart during exhalation. This is listening to and following the breath.

The practice not only uses the ears to listen, but involves ears, nose, eyes, and mouth. This kind of listening is like feeling the pulse. To feel the pulse is actually a form of listening rather than touching. Feeling the pulse works in three layers, first, second, and third. How should the three layers be pressed? Using force for sure, but the key is listening correctly. Use all your sensory organs to listen, and listen to your perfect breathing without stopping. As you inhale, stem *qi* goes down past the navel; as you exhale, it rises up but not above the heart. Doing this, you are listening not only to the human heart but also to the heart of Dao. Listen to your perfect breathing without stopping, to make the human

heart and that of Dao rely on each other. This allows you to enter a state of unconsciousness. At this point, in your body universe you can experience the location of the lowest and highest point, as well as primordial heaven and earth within. This way, when you get to the practice of the Three Immortals, it will be easy for you to install the furnace and set up the cauldron.

4. After you have completed the practices of attracting immortality, you may proceed to the practice of the Three Immortals to install the furnace and set up the cauldron. In order to do this, use all the sensory organs to listen to the changes inside. Conclude with the silent circulation of the five phases.

5. The perfect heart-and-mind is the heart of your body universe, the heart of original organism. The body is the residence of the heart, which in turn is the master of the body. Here quite possibly perfect yin and yang will appear. In ancient times, they were called the two substances, also known as lead and mercury. From here you build your foundation. For this, you enter *samadhi* and practice thorough cleansing.

12th Method: Nurturing and Cleansing the Heart-and-Mind

To refine essence you need to refine primordial essence; to refine *qi* you need to refine primordial *qi*; to refine spirit you need to refine primordial spirit. Spirit, *qi,* and essence have the same source and as heaven and earth, form one organism with the myriad things. You get them, you live; you lose them, you die. Use yang fire and transform it into yang *qi*; use yin tokens (wind) to nurture it and make it into yin essence. Therefore, it is said: seeing it, you cannot use it; using it, you cannot see it.

Take the primordial spirit, concentrate it, and enter it through the orifices of *qi,* listen to and follow the breath, constantly focus spirit and intention, turn the light around, and reverse reflection. The process is much like a hen hatching an egg or a dragon nurturing its pearl: it needs a warm fire and constant temperature. Then spirit and *qi* are plentiful, perfect yang *qi* flourishes: indeed, it is marvelously inexhaustible. This is the most important cultivation method in Daoism: refine essence to transform into *qi,* refine *qi* to transform into spirit, refine spirit to return to emptiness: this is the core of practice.

At this point you develop the skills to let the heart liquid descend and the kidney stem *qi* ascend. As perfect spirit shines down, primordial yang arises within, spirit and stem *qi* unite, mother and child love each other, water and fire aid each other. They all join in the Central Palace and become one. This is the first method of cultivating immortality. We call it "attracting immortality."

As you focus the heart, heart fire descends to the lower field. Thus, it is said: heart liquid descends to the lower field, it opens the path like an iron ox plowing a field. This is in preparation of the practice of the Three Immortals.

The culmination of attracting immortality is the beginning of the practice of the Three Immortals. At this time, under the guidance of your inner master, you can officially start this. As the *Lingbao bifa* says, this leads to the perfected body:

> Perfect heart and perfect respiration support each other, spirit and *qi* will naturally rely on each other. When heart, breath, spirit, and *qi* rely on each other constantly, you naturally enter *samadhi*; after reaching *samadhi*, there is one more barrier: nurturing and cleansing the heart. Few people know about it.

Explanation

1. To steady perfect breathing, you need to use all the sensory organs to check the activities and changes in the inner organs and the outer physical form, rather than using just the heart. Focus all your sensory organs on people, affairs, and things, thereby to examine the changes within and outside the organism. The senses should work together closely, plus you use consciousness and sensations to examine the inner organs. Keep them as relaxed as possible to nourish and protect them. At this time, spirit and stem *qi* naturally rely on each other, and you easily enter *samadhi*. "After reaching *samadhi*, there is one more barrier: nurturing and cleansing the heart. Few people know about it." You inner master will guide you to proceed to the practice of the Three Immortals

2. When practicing, there will be a few instances when vibration or shaking occurs, and in fact, it may happen within a few breaths. It typically happens if natural or pore breathing is unbalanced. So make sure during internal breathing, that you inhale and guide the *qi* down past the navel, then exhale and let it rise but not above the heart. If it gets too low, it reaches the opening of life and death, penetrates the bladder, gets to the back of spine, the *qi* may well start to move. These movements are not all the same and you can see them coming. If the *qi* enters the lower field, it can also generate movement. When you lengthen the time of this movement, it will gradually become balanced. Do not be afraid if it moves; if it moves, let it. It is actually very comfortable, it may well shake a bit and wander around, but at this time the legs feel no pain and the *qi* is balanced, too. You can also try to change the external to an internal movement, then follow the internal movement and switch it to a movement of spirit, then follow this and change it into movement of the life force.

3. Nurturing and cleansing the heart-and-mind is best expressed in the three poems cited below: The last contains the phrase, "Thinning flavors, you can nourish blood *qi,*" which means at this point, you should eat vegetarian.

Forgetting

Forgetting things, you can nourish the heart.
Forgetting emotions, you can nourish your inner nature.
Forgetting stillness, you can nourish spirit.
Forgetting lust, you can nourish essence.
Forgetting desires, you can nourish your physical form.
Forgetting the physical form, you can nourish the stem *qi*.
Forgetting yourself, you can nourish emptiness.
Forgetting affairs, you can nourish Dao.

The "Few" Formula

Having few words, you can nourish your stem *qi*.
Having few affairs, you can nourish your reputation.
Hearing few sounds, you can nourish your intelligence.
Having few thoughts, you can nourish your heart-and-mind.
Having few desires, you can nourish your inner nature.
Having few activities, you can nourish your spirit.
Having few virtues, you can nourish essence.

The "*Qi*" Formula

Reducing speech, you can nourish internal *qi*.
Limiting sexual desires, you can nourish essence *qi*.
Thinning flavors, you can nourish blood *qi*.
Supporting the body fluids, you can nourish organ *qi*.
Guarding against anger, you can nourish liver *qi*.
Limiting food and drink, you can nourish stomach *qi*.
Balancing embryo respiration, you can nourish lung *qi*.
Reducing thoughts and worries, you can nourish heart *qi*.
Never leaking essence, you can nourish kidney *qi*.
Carefully circulating and storing, you can nourish spirit *qi*.

Chapter Thirteen B

Explanation of the Methods

These twelve methods of attracting immortality play a role in every part of the *Lingbao bifa*, appearing variously in each of its forty-five sections, more in some than in others. Methods of the *Taiyi jinghua zongzhi* are similarly closely connected. The methods of attracting immortality mainly serve to steady people's inherent patterns, making them match the natural rhythms of the universe. Daoists believe that the main characteristic of sitting meditation is the merging of the human heart with that of the universe and that of the earth, so that all three unite in oneness. Heaven is breathing, the Planet Earth is breathing, and both are constantly in motion. It is essential that heaven, earth, and humanity all unite in oneness.

Foundation

When first practicing drawing the inner nature line, the main principle is that you work on inner nature before life-destiny. However, before you can draw it, you must build the foundation, then silently circulate the five phases; both are methods of attracting immortality. Once you have built your foundation, move on to draw the inner nature line, then again silently circulate the five phases. This serves as an example of inner nature practices leading to life-destiny practices. They combine opening the Heavenly Eye with the methods of attracting immortality.

In building the foundation, Daoists use metaphors from external alchemy to describe internal elixir methods. So, from the perspective of elixir concoction, the methods of attracting immortality are not the foundation nor do they provide methods for it. When you start the process, you must spend a lot of time and effort to learn the fundamentals. If you do not spend this time and build a good foundation, you will never see any real achievements.

To refine the elixir properly, you must build a good foundation, which means that you must develop good foundation skills. In cultivating the human organism, if you use your socially defined body as the furnace, your foundation will not be good, and without a proper furnace there is no way you can make progress in cultivation (elixir refinement). So, every time you want to practice,

make sure you have a strong foundation. Building the foundation involves the process of leveling the surface, setting up the furnace, installing the cauldron, collecting the ingredients, loading them, refining them through regulating the fire, and more.

There are two possible outcomes, success (foundation complete) or failure (foundation incomplete).

Every time you practice, pay close attention to building a good foundation. If you get about half way and experience problems, you may fail and have to start over again, building the foundation anew. The methods of attracting immortality call for steadying the upper and lower halfmoon spheres of the body until they are balanced. Also, the seven upper orifices must be focused so they can turn inward: the nose does not smell, the eyes do not look outside, and ears do not listen outside. This means the foundation is complete.

At this time, you still have sensations and awareness, but you must turn your vision inward. After constructing the foundation, first steady yourself, then silently circulate the five phases. Once you are done with that, synchronize the three centers. Building the foundation is the hardest thing to do, and for that you must purify yourself. A hundred days of building a foundation does not literally mean a hundred days on the calendar but refers to "one pure day." One pure day of achievement leads to building a good foundation. There is a work in the Daoist canon that specifically explains the training method of one pure day. One hundred days of building a foundation is actually the same thing as setting up the furnace and installing the cauldron, the practical way of moving from outside to inside, that is, the top Daoist method of the internal leading the external into oneness.

The requirements of sitting in meditation are: keep the spine straight, slightly raise your head, keep your eyes closed, lightly touch your teeth together, and have your tongue touch the upper palate. (Note whether it is rolled or lifted up against the top. Ideally it should just touch.) The purpose of this is to seal the seven orifices in the head. Chapter 8 of the *Taiyi jinghua zongzhi* says, "The six roots and seven orifices all store light." It also says, "The blind are not good at practicing Dao, the deaf have no obstacles."

On the one hand, you need to relax; on the other hand, your spine needs to be straight (not rigid). To keep it straight, do not use force. If you use force to straighten it, this may impede the smooth flow of *qi*. People's spines can never be totally straight, but we say that their inner "pillar" is straight. There are two types of pillars: the ecliptic and the equator. This is the reason why the spine can never be completely straight. Within all this movement, there is one central place that is totally straight, and this center is simply called the spine.

People's necks are naturally curved and cannot be perfectly straight. Deep inside the neck, however, there is something profound known as the Twelve-storied Tower, so called because it is a difficult barrier during cultivation. It is the front part of Jade Pillow, which is very hard to get through. However, once

you have made it through, the passage gets very easy. Almost all masters here invoke Guan Yu's journey of "crossing the five passes and slaying the six generals" as a method for overcoming the difficulties and as an example to illustrate the situation.

First, open your eyes and look straight ahead as far as you can. Do this with determination. Look toward the farthest horizon. (Pay attention to what exactly is the farthest horizon. Is it the front part of the back of your head?) From here, slowly retrieve spirit light and focus it in the center of the eyebrows. Gently close your eyes as if dropping down a curtain. Lightly close your lips, touch your teeth together, place your tongue against the upper palate, and keep the spine straight. At this time, the conditions are in place for two lines to appear. A space opens above, which contains the seven orifices and six roots [of the senses]. The six roots are the most sensitive organs in contact with the outside world; they cause a lot of trouble for people. From this the six forms of defilement emerge. When we just start sitting in meditation, it is vital that you close down the six roots and prevent the arising of all defilement.

When you first open your eyes and look straight ahead, what ultimately are you looking at? Really, you don't see anything. Then primordial spirit emerges, but you cannot see it and you cannot remember what you saw. This training method unites the three spirits. If you do remember anything, this is the work of the conscious spirit. Looking straight ahead without seeing anything and foolishly bringing something back, you are also using the conscious spirit (and not the primordial spirit). This movement is somewhat like the "great brightness" in Buddhism (different from great enlightenment). The great brightness only comes in contact with your eyes when you look straight ahead. When you unconsciously look straight ahead, you may catch sight of something, but once again you cannot remember it. Yet this something that is in front of you can be brought into your brain and body, to be received repeatedly. What exactly are you collecting here? The life force knows: you are collecting life-force *qi*.

Next, keep your eyes closed and look slightly down or inside. Doing so you use the conscious spirit to lead the primordial spirit: you are fully conscious. Now, open your eyes and look straight ahead, then focus and retrieve the light, then again close your eyes. Once your eyes are closed, the conscious spirit occupies the main position, and the primordial spirit is secondary. At this time, turn your vision inward, and let the conscious spirit lead the primordial spirit into your body. One drop of perfect yang also arises here: it simply comes in. What exactly is coming in? Right now we still do not know because it has not moved yet.

Steady yourself well. Once your body is stable and your body universe has formed, again close your eyes and look inside. You should be able to see it. It is a bit like the Buddhist meditation technique of beginning samatha-vipasyana. Look into the space of your head. First you see nothing, so keep turning your vision inward. Still, unfortunately you don't see anything. But we do have something

inside, there is a brain in the head, and this connects to the organs. All these really exist inside, but we are unaware of them. Master Lü said, this is the greatest sorrow of mankind: our internal organs are always active, our insides are constantly making sounds, but we are totally unaware of them and our inner stuff remains invisible to us. We do not really understand ourselves. How very sad!

Basic Steps

The first step is to look inside at real things. Turn your vision inward and "look." This is not normal looking, but more like an awareness, an inner knowing. What are all these things doing in your body? What are they like? Where are they located? Therefore, in both the *Lingbao bifa* and the *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji*, the first step is turn your vision inward. Look in the direction of the inside, advance toward yourself, and you will find that there is a space. This space is actually the upper field, it is called the Central or Niwan Palace among the nine palaces in the head. Underneath, on the earth, are nine provinces, and the lower field is the central province. The scriptures say that stem *qi* enters the central province and not a field or even the lower field. Otherwise it would have specifically said that the stem *qi* enters the lower field.

Turn your vision inward, come back and look, then again look down. As you look at your heart (the five organs and six viscera), there is yet another layer and you can also look at your bone marrow, the meridians, and the vessels. You cannot really see them, but they do exist: this is our great sorrow. You do not realize that you have something inside of you, so when you get sick, you have no idea where exactly the disease is located, but only know the rough position of the pain. Is it even possible for you to turn your vision inward and look at each part separately? Can you see each individual region? Can you see where the errors are, where the movement is not smooth? The purpose of turning your vision inward is to learn about yourself, so you know the changes in your body and its inner structures. All this is clearly outlined in the Daoist scriptures.

The first method is to learn to listen. Contain seeing and reverse hearing, listen to the sounds within, paying attention to cosmic and stem *qi*. In the beginning, there is nothing to hear. You only hear sounds from outside and you cannot distinguish whether you are listening to something on the inside or the outside. Inner sounds are ringing at all times, things move and make noise all the time. The first step, then, is to listen to the heart, since the heartbeat moves the blood, and once the blood moves, there is sound. As you breathe, too, the lungs produce sound, one lobe opening, the other closing. Keep on listening to the subtle sounds of the inner organs. In ancient times they were called the sounds of the spirit valley: mostly deep and beautiful, but not all the time.

The *Daode jing* discusses beautiful and not beautiful sounds (words) in relation to truth. Master Lü applies this discussion to refining the body, describing it

as very beautiful. However, we can listen to the sounds ourselves and decide whether or not they are beautiful and subtle. So, steady your entire body and once more listen inside. This part of attracting immortality centers entirely on reverse hearing and inward seeing.

Each of the twelve methods can be done as a stand-alone practice. Ultimately they are forms of focusing the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation. Thus, steadying the body is also called steadying the body while focusing the mind in sitting meditation. In addition, there is also focusing the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation, which happens when you reverse the direction of the senses to look and listen inside. Plus, the very first step of all twelve methods is called focusing the mind in sitting meditation.

Buddhists and Daoists have similar training methods. The Guanyin path to enlightenment is both subtle and clever. As you contain seeing and reverse hearing, you focus the mind in sitting meditation; this is quite close to a certain section of the Guanyin path. But the Daoist practice overall is more subtle. In the Guanyin path, you focus your mind when your heart is peaceful and your *qi* is quiet, your spirit is still and you are aware of no-self, all mundane circumstances put in order. From here, you reverse hearing to listen to the sounds within. Daoists, on the other hand, state that as spirit is stable and *qi* concentrated, no-self and no-other both appear. Once this happens, you can contain seeing and reverse hearing. These two are more or less the same, but to begin the practice, Daoist are well prepared while Buddhists lack preparation. Because Daoists live in the ordinary world, doing their practice in the midst of life, they prepare while living in the world, setting up means of protection, so the outside world cannot infringe upon them. Buddhists, in contrast, withdraw from the world, isolating themselves from the rest of humanity, and undertake their practice in a monastery. Thus, it seems that they are not so well prepared.

So, retrieve spirit light from the distance, focus it between the eyebrows, close your eyes, and steady the body. Now, turn your vision inward to see inside your head. As you observe the inside, think of a way to slowly move your vision down from the top of the head to the bottom of the torso, descending in a straight line all the way to reach the opening of life and death. Located between the front genitals and the perineum, this is the valve of the urethra and seminal tract, not the perineum itself. Once you reach the point between the genitals at the pelvic floor, slowly ascend it to the lower field. Again turn your vision inward and watch it peacefully. Use the eyes to carry internal stem *qi* from the top of the body, slowly moving it down (through the entire body), to reach the pelvic floor near the perineum. Then inhale to lift it into the lower field.

After it gets to the lower field, inhale softly and focus in the lower abdomen; exhale and let the lower field release, then start to nurture it (using the movement of the lower abdomen). Drum the lower field, then breathe along with its motions, letting the breath move the lower field, working with both

ideas at the same time. Also, at this time there may be a pause in the movement of the lower field. Maybe something starts to rise up, but do not let it exit from the top of the head (that is, do not allow it to go out through the crown). The top of the head has two pathways, one leads through Hundred Meeting, the other through the Crown Gate. Nothing should exit through them, but you can let things come in.

Since we do not know what is coming in, never mind whether it is good or bad, just keep it in the body. (In fact, what comes in will sometimes be good, sometimes bad). Do so by using pore breathing. Seal them, and everything will stay in the body. It will go somewhere and will gather there, following its own path and reaching its final destination. It will find a place to stop, and that place is its home. As the scriptures say, "After *qi* flows into the body, it will return to a place it likes." This is just it. Practicing pore breathing is the same. Using pore breathing will expand your space, but you can also use it to grasp things from the greater universe and bring them into your body (everyone receiving something different). Eventually the stuff you collect finds its home within.

Close your eyes and turn your vision inward. First look at the uppermost part of yourself (after drawing the reflection and inner nature line, you should be able to see). Push down from the highest point, so you use the *qi* of spirit and life force. Master Lü did not call this the yin spirit and yang spirit, but instead spoke of the *qi* of spirit and life force. Use your eyes to send it all the way down, moving very slowly and letting your eyes follow the movement until the *qi* gets to the perineum. Exhale and lift it: it will start to ascend. Master Lü said that after it goes down, there is some kind of flirting power you need to use. He noted that it is like flirting with a loved one and that this is the only way it will manage to ascend.

"Once you get this kind of feeling, enter it in the Kun Palace," thereby to form the embryo. In fact, you don't actually form an embryo this way, but he says it to illustrate a problem with this method. If you do not flirt, nothing will arise. What Master Lü said here is a very delicate thing, truly a sensitive subject.

In the scriptures, this step forms a part of turning your vision inward. Descend all the way from the top, descend until you reach the bottom and then again return to the lower field. It is mandatory that the yin *qi* descends, because the yang *qi* will then rise. This is called the upper is clear and the lower is turbid. It is like a bulldozer pushing from the top to the perineum area at the bottom and then lifts it up. *Lingbao bifa* says "within yin there is yang, within yang there is yin". If yin is abundant there must be one drop of perfect yang, the abundant yin comes into contact with it as it pushes down, when there is something to descend, there is something to ascend. During the last section when you push it down there most certainly is yang within the yin *qi* and then what rises must have some yin within the yang *qi*.. The *qi* from above is pushed down until it reaches the yin area, it pushes down to the perineum, at this point it converges, one drop of perfect yang returns to the Kun Palace.

Close your eyes and turn your vision inward. This, according to Master Lü, establishes a pattern of method and practice. Method leads and practice follows. Formerly the methods were only taught to recluses, strictly transmitted orally to be remembered by heart, each word highly specific and full of purpose, nothing carelessly leaked. Focus spirit and bring it into the body, take spirit and focus it in the body, all refer to this method.

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* describes this kind of sitting practice with the words, "The emperor issues a decree, causing the light to turn around, and the *qi* of the entire body attends the imperial court." This explains the method exactly. It is also recorded in the *Lü zushi sanni yishi shuoshu* (Recorded Sayings of Master Lü Healing the World). According to this, Master Lü said: "The method is to first close your eyes, with intention control the spirit in the eyes, then guide it into the brain. Continue moving it into the center of the brain, then let it ooze out through the top of the head. This form matches Great Strength. It forms the first step of training."

To validate Master Lü's statements, the text provides extensive explanations, but the main idea is: Just keep looking up, and when something is there let it sink down, all the way to the bottom and up again. Once it reaches Meeting Yin, inhale and let is rise.

Great Strength (Hexagram 34 ䷡) says: 'Great' means upright. The hexagram consists of Qian (Heaven) below and Zhen (Thunder) above. Qian is heaven and the head; Zhen is Thunder or vibration. Thus, the practice starts here. "The emperor emerges at Zhen." Here the emperor is Great Unity, the perfect oneness that governs all things. Zhen (Thunder ☳) and Xun (Wind ☴) transform into many things: as your eyes look up into the brain, if there is a lot of white, we say that you are also gazing at the Kun Palace. Zhen signifies the movement of yang; in one sense, it refers to the heart beat, one way in which yang *qi* moves. "The method is to first close your eyes, with intention control the spirit in the eyes, then guide into the brain." Master Lü said:

> Visualize perfect oneness, guard the perfect prime. Perfect oneness is inner nature; perfect prime is *qi*. The brain is the Ocean of Marrow. It also means that heavenly nature comes to reside in the upper mansion, which is like the sacred realm of Jade Clarity in the upper heavens. This realm is extremely pure, located above the moon and the stars. It is a heaven of Great Nonbeing. If you know how to visualize and guard it, you will naturally reach the bright Dao.

Continue moving it into the center of the brain, then let it ooze out through the top of the head. He further said:

> The brain is the Palace of Jade Clarity in the body, where [the Heavenly Worthy of] Primordial Beginning resides. The top of the head (fontanelle)

is called Gateway; in acupuncture, it is the Hundred Meeting. Here the three primes come together, integrating the three heavens in perfect oneness. As you guide it toward the top of the head, you can feel perfect oneness opening and the perfect prime coming together. Proof appears when you can see red and yellow specks of light as if rain is sprinkling down on you.

Perfect oneness is formless, and the only thing you can see is the perfect prime—the latter being the *qi* of perfect oneness. This is the first step.

Master Lü said: "Method leads and practice follows." Here method means rules, while practice is application. "Method starts with closing your eyes," means that the eyes are the masters of our heart-and-mind and guide the movement of *qi* and spirit. The *Falu* (Record of Methods) says, "Eyes and spirit reside in heaven, that is, they are the two commanders." In the body, when you walk, they flow down to Bubbling Spring in the feet; when you sit, they flow to the kidneys in the lower back. "Close" means to concentrate. The meaning of "subtle" is like nonbeing, while "intention" refers to the commander of mind and spirit: it commands and they march, just like the ruler in the world issuing an edict. "Flow up" means it moves to the top of the head, where it connects to the prime of perfect oneness, thereby to protect self and world.

Great Strength, as noted above, is number 34 among the sixty-four hexagrams. Master Lü used this to describe the method of cultivation and provided detailed explanations. "Close the eyes" thus means that you shut your eyelids; "intention commands" means that you concentrate the intention of spirit and keep on focusing it. The "eyes of spirit" are key, they tell us what kind of spirit we are focusing, whether we can actually see it, what it is called if we can see it and what if we cannot see it. "Flow it into the brain" means that you turn your vision inward. Directing your attention to the brain is absolutely essential, without it there is no way you can complete "the three pills of immortality" or any other elixir.

Perfect Oneness

The two eyes and the Heavenly Eye make three points that combine into one. This is called "the sun and moon unite into one disk." After they unite, you can focus them within, looking inward. Looking inward is not the same as flowing it, and the three points really become one, so that the spirit that flows inside the head is really a single flow. "Continue moving it into the center of the brain" means literally the core of the brain and not the head, the center above. Ideally you guide it into the upper field, the Central Palace of the five senses. Once you get it into the upper field, you can direct it some more toward the top of the head. The guided instructions for this are: Close your eyes and turn your vision inward to look inside, then move up and look down for a while. Watch

the highest point of the body, and from here move down, descending section by section until you reach the lowest point.

The opening at the top of the head or Hundred Meeting is a place of entry and exit. It has two parts that you should pay attention to: the Crown Gate and the top of the head (the highest point in the body). The brain is where the three primes gather, which at this stage are primordial spirit, primordial essence, and primordial *qi*. Here they come together, integrating the *qi* of the three heavens in perfect oneness. The three heavens are Highest, Jade, and Great Clarity. As you guide it toward the top of the head, you can feel perfect oneness opening, touching the upper rim, and the perfect prime coming together. Proof appears when you can see red and yellow specks of light as if rain is sprinkling down on you from the top, falling from above and dropping all the way to the bottom.

"Perfect oneness is formless, and the only thing you can see is the perfect prime." This means, what you see and feel at this time is the perfect prime. Perfect oneness is also great unity; the perfect prime is perfect inner nature. The specific training method is: First close your eyes but not too tightly or too loosely. (At this time, we do not speak of dropping the curtain; when you are able to drop the curtain, your level of achievement is quite high). You have the intention of martial fire, so you increase it. "Control" means to concentrate, and concentrating your intention means controlling the conscious spirit. Turn inward and watch, observe what is going on inside, and use conscious spirit to bring primordial spirit into the brain. Where does it go? We do not know. Use some force to turn your concentration toward the brain. Softly inhale a bit of *qi,* let it enter the center of the brain, where you will find a palace known as Niwan.

When you arrive at the Niwan hold your intention gently for a while, then turn it toward the top of the head, the fontanelle. Guide it upward to the Hundred Meeting point, imitating the pattern of Great Strength (Zhen above, Qian below). Qian matches the emperor; within the human body it is the head. In this hexagram, the emperor is below. When there is movement above, it will also move. If there is no movement above, it will still move. It moves inside the head, never being motionless. Once you have felt its movement, start to guide the things you noticed at the top of the head downward. The pattern of the hexagram Great Strength indicates to circulate anything that moves to the emperor and collect it below, in the lower abdominal area. After reaching the lower abdomen, collect everything downward one again, circulating it to the pelvic floor. From here, inhale and lift it. All this is very subtle.

Steady the internal energies until the top is clear and the bottom is turbid, then practice the silent circulation of the five phases, and the core center will appear. This method is part of both, attracting immortality and the *Lingbao bifa.* It is called steadying the upper and lower halfmoon spheres. The head is above, the abdomen below. Because the pressure above, in the head, is higher than below, it is important to regulate both until the pressure is equal. This is hard. Essentially you guide the pressure from the head down into the abdomen. At this time, fo-

cus spirit, turn your vision inward, and push from the top down to the bottom. Let it sink down through the entire body and all sides. Use both eyes to send internal stem *qi* down, guide it to Meeting Yin, then let it rise again to return to the lower field. When yin reaches its extreme, yang starts to arise as symbolized in the hexagram Fu ䷗. This one drop of perfect yang, then, rises from the place of extreme yin in the body and move to the lower field. Nourish this little bit of perfect yang.

As this single drop of perfect yang carries the essential life force, it is also called the water of perfect oneness or perfect stem *qi*—each term reflecting a different stage of the process. Once you feel a little bit of something at the bottom inhale and lift it into the lower field. Then use the lower field to nurture it. As it comes up make sure to breathe softly to focus it in the lower abdomen. The lower abdomen will start to move a bit. If it does not move, maybe nothing has yet arrive at the Central Palace, so increase your level of control. Stem *qi* alone gathering in the Central Palace may be dangerous. Even if it starts to surge up, it is not a drop of perfect yang.

The best way to nurture this yang in internal alchemy is as follows. Step one, let a single drop of perfect yang enter the Kun Palace (lower field). Coordinate your breathing with the movement of your body, keep the entire body still and let only the lower field move. In this manner, the lower field absorbs internal body energy (original energy). Use this to nourish the single drop of perfect yang as it rises from the yin area. This is not easy to achieve. Master Lü said that the main thing is to watch yourself and see whether you can nurture your internal "spirit," relying on your internal body energy to enhance this drop of perfect yang.

For one drop of perfect yang to enter the body, there must be a precise moment in the interplay of yin and yang. The single drop of perfect yang leaves or arrives according to a specific set time. Daoists have their own theories on time, which are quite precise. The moment when something starts to move is called a time spot. If the lower field starts to move at such a time spot, things begin to circulate, but it is not clear where they go first, or where later. Only for the silent circulation of the five phases (minor elixir circulation) have the ancestral teachers determined how and where the energy moves, how it circulates according to the generating of controlling cycles, at which time spot it moves and when it does not move. It is foolish to assume the time spot cannot be changed; thinking that it can only change according to set numbers leads to rigidity and stale practice. The reason is that people are constantly changing all the time, getting older day by day.

The purpose of turning your vision inward is to find recuperation and recovery. People have regular habits and think that they can recuperate just fine, so focusing their mind in meditation is difficult for them. It is essential to keep the body still and the spirit settled, to wait patiently until spirit becomes fierce with determination, then start practicing according to the guided instructions. From here, practice by following Laozi's sayings:

Let there always be being; let there always be nonbeing.
Let there always be desire; let there always be no desire. (ch. 1)

When you first sit, you have no idea how to "let there always be no desire" or what you do if you suddenly wake up in a state of "let there always be desire." For now, consistently keep your intention focused on your nose. Turn your vision inward to look at your nose. You may not in fact see it, so make sure to "drop the curtain." Dropping the curtain is very hard to do: the eyes seem be looking yet they really are not. Always breathe through the nose, because it is at the center of the head. The method is to continuously observe as your inhalation and exhalation passes through the nose; it does not require that you observe your actual nose before you start breathing. First it seems as if you are looking but not looking at the breathing through your nose, then you start observing the movement of the breath, watching it come in and go out. Make sure it is very soft and that you can see it. If you cannot see it, at least feel it, keeping your intention concentrated and focused on a single point, then using it to magnify and enlarge the breathing through the pores of the head.

From here you move on to breathe through the pores of your skull. Let the bones focus inward so the entire head contracts, then let it expand again: this is the next level. The ears can also move as an open space within the skull. Breathe into it and notice the movement, squeezing the space inward. This is the process.

When looking at your nose, you are in fact concentrating you intention there, making it the center point of your attention. It is very hard to keep it steady, but the practice is key. This is why we spend so much time steadying the breath through the nose. So, it is important to breathe through the nose. The first step requires the breath to be soft, even, and long. The second step requires the breath to be soft, subtle, and long, so that you can find the median line of the head.

Once you get this far, steady the inhalation, then exhale, and again steady the inhalation. After doing this for a while, you may feel great, your head open and empty. However, in fact this is not acceptable. If it happens, immediately expand your intention so it encompasses the entire head and start pore breathing. The pores of the head can move, and it is important that they contract and expand.

Once you notice that the pores move in a very even and balanced way, you can move them in rhythm with your breath. The next step is to get the skull moving, which is one major secret of elixir concoction. Keep on steadying the breath until you truly feel the head pores moving along with the breath, then hold the breath for an instant. If the head's pores are still moving, moving very subtly, you can proceed to focus the ears and seal them.

The purpose of focusing on the ears is to establish the nose as the central line of the head, which must be aligned with the line at the base of the body.

Once you got this, again steady your breathing through the pores on the head. Pore breathing is one form of energy transformation. You want to take hold of the energy within the body and release it out. Do not let cosmic energy enter the body, because it will transform the upper space. Continue the practice until your head is open and empty, then you can proceed to the next step.

Now turn your vision inward toward your head, the eyes not yet looking down. Eventually, and very slowly, let them shift their gaze downward, so that they start looking down ever so softly. At this point, they observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. The eyes move down ever so slowly until eventually they look at the lower abdomen while yet also observing everything on their downward path. As they observe the area, the lower abdomen starts to move. Abdominal breathing at this point is very slow, to the point that it feels as if you are not breathing at all. Since everybody is different, however, there are no specific instructions regarding speed.

The Lower Field

After reaching the lower field, begin to practice breathing with the lower abdomen or abdominal breathing. Finish this, then go back to pore breathing. After that, concentrate your intention in the lower field, since the work starts here. Through breathing here you set up the furnace, install the cauldron, and build the foundation. This process takes a long time. Once it is complete, you establish the materials (using the body as a furnace, the lower field as a cauldron, or the entire organism as a furnace). You apply the force of you entire body to concoct your elixir, firing up your furnace. Now, as you start your work, you can do anything and set everything in motion.

The reason to steady the head first is that the head is above and matches heaven. Only after heaven has been steadied properly can you steady earth (i.e., the abdomen). Keep steadying until you truly feel that the ears contract and expand in harmony with the pore breathing of the head, but do not use your intention to breathe. The head pores also move slightly, which should feel very comfortable. From here, shift your intention downward and move it to the lower field (beginners moving it to the lower abdominal area).

Let the eyes look down and follow along the central line. This involves first to drop the curtain over they eyes and look at the nose. The eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. This means that the heart observes the lower field. Use the conscious spirit to guide internal stem *qi* to the lower field. Inhaling and focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale and expand the lower abdomen, so that the abdominal space can squeeze everything out. Gradually increase the force in the lower abdomen until it is quite massive, then add even more force until you cannot make it any bigger.

The lower abdomen may still be moving and now forms a space, below which all is empty.

After steadying the pressure in the head to completely balance it, let your intention move down (along the central line which is different from the Conception Vessel). Wherever the intention goes, *qi* moves, aided by steadying the abdominal breathing.

As you breathe through the nose, inhale and move the *qi* down. When you first start practicing, do not worry whether it does actually go down. Rather, pay attention to your intention. Inhale and let the lower abdomen slowly move in, bringing your intention there. Make sure to complete each and every breath. Inhale and let the lower abdomen slowly contract; exhale and let it expand. The intention is always here, continuously concentrated inside. Do this for about three to five minutes. Now start to steady the body. In fact, you are not yet truly steadying the body, but simply examining how you are sitting. The whole body is relaxed: shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands are all relaxed. Again, steady the breath and keep on steadying it. The difference from the first level is that the pores now are slightly moving whereas before they were not.

Once you steady the body properly, the pores should start to move and begin to exchange stem *qi*—although this is somewhat difficult. The *qi* of the prime of heaven enters the organism, which releases its internal stem *qi*: this is called body and mind settling down. As Master Lü said, "Human beings live in *qi*; *qi* lives in human beings." Practice until the two *qi* of yin and yang form a round sphere on the surface of your organism, what Master Lü described as the edge of the small body universe. At this time, you will sense that the internal organism is empty, but in fact it is not. After all, cosmic *qi* enters it and it is also full of internal stem *qi*. At this point, even without guided instructions, you may enter a state of stable sitting, which is very comfortable. If you cannot do pore breathing, start to make your exhalations very soft, subtle, and long, letting the body sink down. You may start to feel sleepy, but even as you feel like sleeping, you are very stable.

Inhale and squeeze the *qi* of the lower abdomen from its larger area (the big open space) into a smaller space, pushing it into the lower field. The abdominal area itself has stem *qi,* much of it highly chaotic: it gathers and produces heat; it disperses and cools down. This conforms to the principles of physics. Gather the abdominal stem *qi* and condense it into the lower field: at this time the body emits heat. Release it out, and the body starts to cool. Indeed, if you feel some warmth in the lower field, release the *qi* and start pore breathing, thus letting the body and cosmic energies start to exchange. Practice pore breathing, then hold the breath while the pores are still moving. (At the beginning of the practice the pores may not be moving.) If the pores are still moving when you are not breathing, this is neither ordinary respiration nor perfect respiration.

Pore breathing is a way to exchange energy with the universe, discharging bad, turbid stem *qi* from the body and bringing in good, fresh *qi*. As much as you keep discharging, there will always be stuff that is not good or harmful, while the

good stuff will never leave, never exit from the body. Whatever bad stuff remains will harm the body: Daoists call it the Three Corpses or Deathbringers. They are three parasitic forces, partly organic, partly divine, that do a lot of harm to the individual and eventually get to feast on his corpse.

Engaging in pore breathing, you enable your body universe to form a unique sphere, its very own self. You may draw support from Laozi's *Qingjing jing*. The body contains its own heaven and earth, responding to heaven and earth outside. Vice versa, the universe outside closely matches that within. The universe within has a ruler, who makes sure that the *qi* of the outside universe reaches it. Without this ruler, the internal *qi* will move toward the outside, and you cannot attain Dao. On the contrary, your connection with Dao will diminish.

Become aware of the open space above as well as that below, then start to practice pore breathing with your entire body. Now bring cosmic energy into the body, allowing the *qi* to enter (into the body) from all four sides and eight directions. Keep doing it for a very long time to make sure that all the body pores move. The amount of *qi* you receive is minute, while what you release is humongous. You should feel it being very real, and as you keep receiving cosmic *qi* you can start directing it into the lower field. Keep increasing the force you put in the open space below, increasing it until you become aware of yet another space within it: this is the lower field.

To transform cosmic energy into body energy and direct it into the lower field requires a huge amount of force. Once you have accomplished that, listen to and follow the breath: inhale and contract the lower field; exhale and let it expand. The field moves in accordance with your breathing. If, after moving for a while, it stops, once more use your breathing to push the lower field, waking it up and creating its proper space.

To review, settle down in meditation and start to practice pore breathing. Inhale and let the pores contract, all focus is on the inside, condensing it to be very small. Exhale and let the pores expand. Guiding instructions cannot describe all these comprehensive movements at once. For this reason, the first instruction is: inhale and let the *qi* press into the pores from all four sides and eight directions. The second instruction is to focus it in the body, condensing it to be very small, then exhale and release it widely. The third instruction is to inhale very slowly and gradually condense the *qi* inside.

When the pores are contracting, they slowly push inside, guiding the abdominal area to do the same. At this time, let your body feel totally relaxed and empty, we call this being "hollow," meaning that there is nothing inside. In reality, there is not actually nothing there: the body still has its parts (bones and spaces), but the three energetic spaces are now formed. Again steady your breathing, let body and mind settle down, then turn your vision inward to look at your head, looking up slight. As the guiding instructions explain, watch for changes in your body universe looking from top to bottom.

Very slowly let your vision move down, looking at everything. Inspect what happens in the various parts and see if there is movement or stillness. In fact, most people cannot hear any movements in the body, which is very sad, showing just how dull they are. The ability to hear has nothing to do with the vigor of effort. The heart is beating anyway, the blood is flowing, the inner organs are active, especially the heart. Since they are already doing it, the first requirement of practice is to become aware of it, to listen to your heartbeat: the heart is really beating, producing a real sound. But most people cannot hear this, which is very sad, since the heart is in fact moving. Your own heart is beating, and you have no clue.

Let your eyes turn inward to look at the activities in your human body universe, as you get your ears to listen to the sounds inside. You should be able to hear them. Master Lü said: "The heart is the most active." When this activity is very strong, you can hear a sound within and feel a faint movement. Steady your breathing to be soft, subtle, and long. That is, inhale and exhale very slowly. Also, inhale and contract, exhale and let go: it seems as if the body flops down (like being totally collapsed). However, as the spine cannot collapse and your form is not affected, this collapse is more like a sinking in the open space within, a feeling of something descending. Only after you notice this do we speak of turning your vision inward, an activity that happens as you sit in meditation. Sit and observe yourself like this for some time.

This step is mainly about making the inside completely relaxed and open to let the three spaces emerge. Begin by listening to the upper section: does the head have motion? Then listen to the chest: is there movement here? Next listen to the abdomen: again is there movement? It is important to achieve a state where all three spaces are empty, then turn your vision inward. When turning your vision inward, it is important to find a way to see something. At this time spirit is in the body—make sure to keep it there. You are still at the stage of focusing your life force, carried mainly by cosmic energy. So, focus its *qi,* which is used by transmitted energy, and see that it moves.

The *Taiyi jinghua zongzhi* says: When your practice reaches a certain level, you may cry and laugh. Laughter will push the spaces to move in sync, while crying will cause the organs to produce a kind of flow. If someone laughs during practice, you know that his or her spaces are moving. In the same way, crying shows that the organs are active, but to find out which of them is moving, you need to examine them carefully. Which space is it? Which one is empty? And so on. Once it is empty, there is no more laughter. And when this happens, you may start to feel alignment within.

Next, push cosmic energy into the lower field, and from there into the space of the lower abdomen. This serves to make the upper and lower spaces as balanced as possible, to steady the upper and lower halfmoon spheres. This is tough. If the abdominal pressure is large, it can cause a lot of problems, including high blood pressure. Pushing the energy helps to form a space in the

center of the body. When a space appears here, pay close attention. Should you call it Central Yellow or Yellow Center? Are they the same?

Internal Space

After the lower space is formed, the body matches the Taiji or Great Ultimate diagram, clear above and turbid below. This happens because on the last breath of *qi* being focused, cosmic energy fills the lower field while the upper space is empty. Do not move this, but keep your intention and conscious spirit continuously in the lower field. Let the conscious spirit lead the primordial spirit there, so that primordial essence and *qi* are there, too. This means, the lower field is now full. Once it is full, it is in fact turbid. The upper space being empty, it is actually clear. At this time there are two possibilities: it either ascends or descends. When the conscious spirit is bigger than the primordial spirit, it descends; vice versa, it ascends.

Now that your have an upper and lower space, what about the middle? Masters Wang Chongyang and Qiu Changchun are among the top to study this. How to focus stem *qi* in the middle palace is a huge problem. If the stem *qi* is not returned properly above, people cannot breathe well and may even faint. This is why we have the Sword Tablet practice, however, without a Central Palace, you cannot do it. The Central Palace is right in the middle of the Taiji, on the center line of the upper halfmoon sphere: thus it can move. How do you keep the Central Palace on this line? This is a great mystery in Daoist alchemy, explained in both the *Lingbao bifa* and *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*.

The purpose of pressing *qi* into the middle space is to eliminate or reduce transmitted energy. The classics note that everything our parents gave us is transmitted energy. Not everything we keep in our body is good. In other words, all the good things our parents gave we display on the outside, but whatever bad things came from them we do not reveal or put on display. Once we throw it all open, the transmitted energy will leave, but we tend to keep the bad things our parents gave us hidden and subconscious.

If the pressure in the middle space is large, you can allow these energies to release. They will manifest in the seven emotions and six desires, which means that if you sit and cannot generate any of them, you might as well not practice at all. That is, the seven emotions and six desires must open and release. Once you have a middle space, transmitted energy will appear at once, and as soon as that happens, do not hold back but let it all come out. It may be hard to continue sitting, and you may feel rather annoyed but stick with it and find a way to settle down.

At this step, the guiding instructions follow the *Dadan zhizhi*, written by Master Qiu, notably its section on "Returning the Light and Steadying the Breathing." The method here has the eyes focus on one spot, centering the body, mind, and spirit between them. Try your best to focus here, reaching a state of

"heaven and earth merged together." Let your mind settle, then use your eyes to look at the tip of your nose. From here keep the vision moving straight down until you are looking below the navel. The eyes are always there, silent and motionless. Allow the nose to breathe, continuously steadying the breathing: it feels as if your life is about to be gone.

Next, eliminate the six forms of defilement (sensory input), then start breathing through the body pores. As you inhale, let the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions press into the pores; as you exhale, let the *qi* flow out from the pores to all four sides and eight directions (filling up the entire practice field). What forms now is the sphere of your own universe; you breathe through the pores to transform the three forms of *qi*.

Sit cross-legged and be very still to practice pore breathing. Once the three forms of *qi* have transformed, your body field or body universe field forms. Now focus the heart-and-mind in sitting meditation and pay attention: are you in *qi* or is *qi* in you? This is the most awkward part of the process.

Through pore breathing, you get the head and the abdomen to breathe steadily, then make them move in sync. The problem here is the mutual exchange among the three kinds of energy. In boys, the *qi* will directly enter the lower field and run forward from there, which leads to wet dreams. Usually at night, the lower area moves, called the activation of passion (or lust, in women). To deal with this, combine all three energies, inhale, and lift the front genitals. Close the opening of life and death, so the spermatic tract is sealed. Once that happens, wet dreams become unlikely. However, without wet dreams you may also be uncomfortable, since there is still movement inside.

The elderly can use pore breathing through head and abdomen as their main method, to eventually reach the lower field. They may nurture the *qi* there, but within ten minutes it will start to rise up to eye level. This is also documented in the classics: "Within three quarters of an hour, *qi* enters the heavenly palace." In fact, these forty-five minutes divide into three segments. If you cannot complete any of them, the *qi* will rise. Still, if you are advanced in years, you have to nurture it, so that you can live longer. For this reason, change the hand gesture to Eight Trigrams *ziwu* and practice calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

After you nurture it for a while, it ascends by itself, which is when you calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice and definitely start seeing a light, which is usually invisible. Once it has appeared, observe it for a while, then push it forward to enlarge it. As it gets bigger, it will undergo some changes, so keep looking at it as if you were not looking and wait until your body energy dissolves into the greater universe. Keep releasing and dissolving it until there is nothing left: it will return by itself. This is also documented in the classics. You cannot see it, yet it collects in the body. So, keep on practicing pore breathing to nurture it.

For those of middle age, regardless whether male or female, letting the *qi* rise to the middle is very dangerous. So, once it has descended, nurture it in the

lower field, from there after a while it will ascend by itself to the middle field. There it tends to get stuck: you want it to sink down, but it won't go; you want it to rise, and it will not budge. At this time your breathing requires a great effort and you feel quite uncomfortable. The is because there is an open space in the center, traditionally called the Yellow Court, able to both move and be still. Once your *qi* gets here, use your entire body to descend it, but this will not work unless you move your hands down. Only with the help of the hands will it descend. If it does not go on the first attempt, try again. Once you get it down to the perineum area, lift it up again at once, raising it up the lower field.

If it moves up and down freely, this indicates the presence of the middle field. Ideally, after it descends something like a soccer ball appears to ascend (this still is not Sword Tablet practice). It may well change direction, so if you cannot control it, push it down, then move it up. You must not stop practicing at this point, but very slowly let it find a place to rest. In the event that it wants to roam around, let it out or make it descend, then move up along the back. From here, you can practice augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact.

There is another special method: after this stem *qi* ascends to the middle field, you may feel tightness in the chest. At this time, transmitted energy may manifest, so use the pore breathing to drive the movement of the middle field. The same also holds true for women's alchemy. If you notice tightness in your chest, use pore breathing to drive the movement of the middle field. As you inhale and the pores contract, so does the middle field; as you exhale and the pores open, so does the middle field.

Daoists say that the kidneys generate stem *qi,* believing that the kidneys form the root of prenatal potency. The *qi* ascending from the lower field is different from that rising from the kidneys or bladder. Masters of old said that the lower field was next to the kidneys, and the bladder was also located within this nurturing triangle. So, use body energy to nurture them, as you inhale slowly focusing the *qi* in the lower abdomen. Focus it in the lower field, lift the front genitals as well as the perineum and anus. As you lift them up, you nurture the lower field. Do this always whenever you work on nurturing.

Once the three spaces are well established, cosmic energy will again concentrate in the lower field, which should start feeling warm. Observe internal heat in the upper and lower halfmoon spheres; as they warm up, see how they are different. Now start to silently circulate the five phases. Conclude this and return to the lower field, keeping it nourished for the entire period of attracting immortality. The methods of attracting immortality form a complete system but they also interconnect and closely relate to all others: they are inseparable. Do not miss any of them.

Focusing the mind in sitting meditation begins with breathing. Inhale and exhale through the nose (matching the length of the in and out breath). The breath must be soft, even, and long. Do this for a long time, always keeping your eyes closed. This comes in three forms: sitting with eyes closed, darkened,

or curtain dropped. The first involves closing the eyes: just allow your lids to cover your pupils. The second involves darkening the eyes: turn your vision inward while keeping your intention on your nose. As you sit with darkened eyes, you feel as if you are in the shadows between the worlds of yin and yang. The ancients described this as being half ghost and half immortal.

The last form is sitting with curtain dropped, a good way to prevent and avoid drowsiness, but not easy. After you sit with darkened eyes for 45 minutes, your microcirculation will slow down and your thinking and consciousness enter an optimal state. You start to steady yourself automatically, which is conducive to longevity. The same also happens when you are sleeping, but meditation overall is best. One way of putting this is to say that meditation is a conscious form of sleep, while sleep is a form of unconscious meditation.

Effects

The meditation period is very long, serving several purposes. Speaking from the top down, it serves to purify your heart, life force, and body. Speaking from the bottom up, it uses your physical being (body organism) to create a spontaneous state of internal stability, serving as a process of self-restoration. The purification process involves steadying through movement. It activates a regulatory mechanism in the human body that functions as a form of self-regulation and spontaneous restoration. The restoration process manifests in two phenomena:

1. As it comes and goes, it typically causes light-headedness and turbidity—most to be dreaded. The reason is that as long as the three types of *qi* have not transformed completely, turbid *qi* within the body cannot discharge and fresh *qi* from the outside cannot enter. Your drowsiness is not because you are actually sleepy or tired.

2. If you calm the spirit and meditate well, sitting becomes smooth and steady. You will be clear-headed, but you do not really know what you are doing. At this time, the clear and turbid are fully separate within: clear *qi* ascends, while turbid *qi* sinks down. Some classic charts draw two lines, one ascending, the other descending. They show how clear *qi* ascends to the top while turbid *qi* sinks to the bottom. Daoist note that the conscious and primordial spirit at this moment are empty and stable; Buddhists speak of them being formless and invisible. However, this does not mean anything at all. Clear *qi* keeps on ascending, while turbid *qi* descends: both move continually. As long as there is a physical body, there is no nothingness. At this time, you will be particularly comfortable. You do not know what to do and if you sit well, you do not even know where your body is. The same kind of restoration also happens when you sleep, but the best way is to focus the mind in sitting meditation. Make sure to follow Master Lü's guidelines:

First step: Among the crowds, I am; among the crowds, I am not (wisdom).

Second step: I am with the myriad beings; among the myriad beings, there is no I (spirit).

Third step: Among people and the outside world, there is an I; among people and the outside world, there is no I (use your body to feel the world).

Master Zhang Ziyang says in his *Qinghua miwen* (Secret Document on Clear Florescence; ZW 150), "In stillness, guide the firing process, stabilize the inside and establish elixir circulation."

Master Bai Yuchan in his *Xuanguan xian milun* (Secret Document on the Manifestation of the Mysterious Pass) notes, "Collect essence and spirit and use them as alchemical ingredients. Become stable in stillness and activate them as fire. Using stillness for fire, refine the ingredients of essence and spirit, then turn them into the golden fluid—major elixir circulation."

The outer form is firm and stable, while the inside is in constant motion. Everything in the body is settled and stable, then on the inside a small spot appears to form the embryo. Since you don't quite realize yet what you are doing, do not activate the firing process. Sitting in your ignorance, it will start to descend.

Stillness means that the conscious spirit is in the heart while the body stays unmoving. Your seven upper and various lower orifices are not leaking to the outside, thus your form is stable. When your form is stable and your inside is still, you can begin the firing process (by steadying the breathing). Following the guided instructions, make sure everyone meditates for a while, thinking about their own inside. This is called "in stillness activate the fire." Keep it very steady, and note that the lower field slowly vibrates or begins to move. Generally when we speak of breathing, we refer to intentional respiration which is artificial, run by the conscious spirit. When the breath pushes the lower field to move, it is called using ordinary respiration leading to perfect breathing (a secret method in the old days).

Once the lower field moves, we do not speak of breathing, but call it movement. From here, the breathing follows the movement of the lower field, so that you inhale when you feel the lower field contracting and exhale as you feel it expanding. There usually is a time limit to these movements: the lower field will move for a while, then stop. As long as it moves, you go along with it, breathing in sync and thus enlarging the movement. When it stops, use the breath to get it to move again, but it is artificial. At this time, the lower field will move along with you as you use ordinary respiration to lead to perfect breathing. Perfect breathing arises in the space between the movement of ordinary respiration and the advancement of the firing process: the breath blows to keep the lower field moving. Since it does so, in the arts of elixir concoction we speak of it blowing through empty holes (reference to *Zhuangzi*).

At this point, you have already established the relationship between ruler and minister, each having its own fire. The movement in the lower field becomes one with you, an essential feature in forming the immortal body or embryo. The

ego is the ruler, and all external things move along with the lower field. Inhale when you feel the lower field contracting: this is your body. Make sure to become aware of the correct way to feel the lower field.

Centered in stillness, your body is motionless, and there is nothing there (a state of nonbeing), only the lower field, with breathing always outside it. The lower field is spherical, and the breath happens on its outside. Inhale as you notice the lower field contracting, even just a slight inward motion, and use your power to condense it. Exhale as you feel it expanding, then again return your vision deep inside it. The breath blows the lower field into action. You may not see it, but it is real. Even after entering it, you cannot see it, yet your perfect *qi* blows and you move it. This is very difficult to do. It is the pivotal moment, when the firing process emerges from stillness.

Sitting still, you may well start rocking back and forth, not only during the lively *zi* hour, but any day, every day. Once you understand this properly, forming the embryo and entering spirit into your stem *qi* become completely obvious.

When you first practice breathing, you feel like you are huge (identifying with your whole body), thinking this is the true you. At the end of the practice, you become quite small and centered inside (being only as big as the lower elixir field): this is your original true you. Use external breathing to keep the lower field moving, inhaling as soon as you feel it contract, then exhale as soon as you notice it expanding. Never let it get away, but keep tight control over the firing process.

When it is small, hold it tight; when it is big, slowly expand it, then drill into the inside, use the breath to push the lower field to expand. Then, as you inhale, the lower field becomes smaller. Usually breathing is ordinary respiration, but inside it turns to perfect breathing. Let the energy enter the center of the lower field, focus on the tiny point in its center, then release the maximum amount of energy: this is the most important point in refraining from eating food (fasting). After you drill into the lower field, keep it nourished, always using the best parts of the body.

During a fast, many cells that are unhealthy, weak, or of low energy will die, leaving only strong energy to remain. We use good, potent stuff to nurture it continuously, and soon it starts to move. Once it moves, use this method. Move to a certain extent, it soon starts to circulate, but there is no fixed schedule since everybody is different.

Stabilize it on the inside to form the elixir: if you push but it does not move, just let it be motionless and do not push again. It means that the head is already full. After that, on the inside there is one drop of perfect yang (now called one drop of perfect *qi*). So what returns from here is not perfect yang, but a drop of perfect *qi*. It is not the field that contains perfect water since you cannot maintain perfect gold in the water. The elixir that comes about here is minor elixir circulation, and even that only appears after you silently circulate the five phases.

Let it settle, and soon you will feel something in the lower field. Start to rotate it, using your lower abdomen to lead the movement of the lower field. Move it forward, backward, left, and right—there is no rule as to which way to go. Look inside to see whether there is anything moving or not. If there is something moving, let it sink down, moving it into the lower field. Continue to shape and congeal this mass in the lower field, so heat is produced and starts to spread around. At this time you can either slowly conclude or continue. You can look to see where it goes: it has its own path and ideas. However, no matter where it goes, each person has a fixed pattern, so that it may run around but will stick to the pattern. It will travel to the internal organs, bones, meridians, or vessels.

At this time, the guide will call to awaken everyone. In fact, it should be the founding ancestors who come to rouse us: first offer the ancestral masters' names, then call those of the disciples. Now the practice changes into "focus and gather spirit, keeping it in the body." Make sure to awaken both kinds of spirit, the primordial as well as the conscious.

Gently allow the eyes to move down to look at your nose, as you breathe through it. This nostril breathing moves in three directions. For now, it goes downward. As you inhale, feel that your head is big but the breath does not move down. Inhale as deeply as possible and make sure to breathe soft, even, and steady. Breathe in and out uniformly several times. Think of a way to keep both your eyes looking at the nose to form a triangle. In addition, there is also a triangle above—both inverted but connected by a line.

At some point, you will start to feel unbalanced. When this happens, start breathing through the pores of the head: inhale and squeeze the *qi* into the head pores from all four sides and eight directions. Inhale and let the pores of the head contract inward; exhale and let them expand outward. If you still feel not quite right, head and body may be not totally straight; in this case, focus the *qi* through the ears. Inhale and gather the *qi* inward through the ears; exhale and let it expand outward through them, observing their link in the center of the brain.

Breathing through the pores of the head is part of attracting immortality, it is called steadying the upper and lower halfmoon spheres, equalizing their pressure. Breathing through the nose should be steadied until the ears move well together. However, do not start by working on the ears, but first practice breathing through the pores of the head. Repeat this a few times, then notice the pressure on the ears. From here you can add in the ears, inhaling to focus on them while also turning your vision inward.

At this point there is no more need to look at your nose. You will notice the head is starting to issue a subtle radiance, and there may also be an image before your eyes or inside your head. A brightness appears before your eyes. At this time, turn your vision inward to look down, let the eyes drop and shut like a curtain and then look at the tip of your nose. Now the eyes look at the nose, the nose looks at the heart, the heart looks at the Cavity of *Qi*. In alignment

with your breathing slowly move your intention down along the midline until it comes to dwell in the lower field. Inhale and slowly focus the *qi* in the lower abdomen. The movement is minute and the lower abdomen barely moves. Keep on strengthening spirit and intention, inhale and let the *qi* move down.

Once your breathing is smooth and steady, add some force in your work on the lower abdomen. As you inhale, focus the *qi* here, gradually increasing force more and more with every inhalation. Contract the lower field until you start to feel something in the front genital area, some sort of movement. Start to inhale, lift up the anus, contract the front genitals, and focus the *qi* in the lower abdomen. The purpose of doing all this at the same time is to seal the three lower yin orifices, which allows the lower field to become fuller. Think of a way to let the breath seal the lower three yin orifices, and you will no longer need a towel.

The New Universe

At this time the inner structure of your body has undergone a change. Left and right are still the same, but above and below have become very clear. By nature, human beings are in constant motion as is the inside of the body. But while ordinary people are not balanced, Daoists strive to reach that state (of balance), and for this the next step is to practice breathing through all the pores of the body. As you inhale, press the *qi* into the pores of the body from all four sides and eight directions; as you exhale, let it releases from the whole body (while body, pores, inner organs, and others all gather inward). As you inhale, focus the *qi* in the body, the organism, and the universe, but do not let anyone see it.

After sealing the three lower yin, start to practice pore breathing (following the methods of the *Lingbao bifa*). As you inhale, press the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions into the pores of the entire body; as you exhale, let it goes out through all the pores into all four sides and eight directions. As you inhale, focus the *qi* in the body; as you exhale, release it from the whole body. There is one more step: as you inhale, focus the *qi* in the body and guide it to the lower field; as you exhale, release it from the lower field through all the pores of the body. Ultimately you manage to listen to and follow the breath smoothly, but before you get there, you need to master another technique: following and listening to the breath.

Listening to and following the breath is more advanced than following and listening to it. The former means that you breathe along with the movement of the pores, while the latter, not described in the classics, involves the conscious spirit leading the *qi,* in other words using ordinary respiration to lead to perfect breathing. Breathe through mouth and nose to lead to perfect breathing, activating the lower abdomen and getting the pores to move.

Because the skin can release turbid *qi,* breathe in fresh air through it: this is why you need to practice pore breathing and get the pores to move. The main

reason your skin does not move is that your breathing is not soft, even, and long enough. Pore breathing requires that you breathe through the nose, making each breath soft, even, and long. At the same time, focus the *qi* in the body, the organism, and the universe, gently moving the pores inward. Don't go to extremes but practice as far as you can, always making sure to keep the three centers unified. Let the universe come into your body, and let your body become one with the universe. Focusing the body means to focus spirit and *qi* into it. As you breathe through the mouth and nose, making each breath soft, even, and long, the essence and *qi* will flow into the body (to be received by the inner organs). Start with the conscious spirit, then focus the primordial spirit, and lastly work on the life force, thereby keeping the three centers unified.

Focusing *qi* in the body and focusing it through the pores are not the same: as you inhale, let the *qi* press in through all the body pores from all four sides and eight directions: this is focusing the pores. As you inhale, focus the *qi* in the body: this is focusing the body. As you inhale, squeeze the *qi* inside through every pore of your body; as you exhale, let it releases from the whole body. The body does not move, but there is slow movement in the pores. As you inhale and focus the body, the body moves and contracts downward; as you exhale, the whole body releases and expands.

Daoists believe that each open space is its own universe. As you inhale and press the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions through all the pores of the body, you focus the cosmic energy of the vast, open universe into your body. To keep it in there, make sure to seal the pores The body focuses it further (shrinking it inward) and starts to move as a whole. As you exhale, it opens and expands. If you do this right, the whole body will get into the action and become replete with focused *qi,* including the legs and the hip bones. As you exhale and the pores of the body expand, the legs will be free from pain. Focusing the body and the pores can be done simultaneously.

Focusing the lower abdomen and focusing the lower field are different. The lower abdomen is below the navel. As you start to inhale and focus the *qi* in the lower abdomen, the navel begins to move, focusing it further. As you exhale, the lower abdomen releases it. During the release, keep the lower abdomen moving forward and let it expand widely. Inhale and focus the *qi* in the lower field focuses by moving inward. At this point, the lower abdomen is also moving, but not very much. When focusing the lower abdomen from the front, you can see an obvious movement. When the lower field focuses it inside, it is more obvious from both sides.

The proper procedure is to use your breathing to steady the body and focus the organism. Organism here refers to our personal energy space, a dimension of self that both includes and goes beyond the body. Your bigger self is your organism; your smaller self is your body. For instance, your physical form starts from the pores and is a (short-lived) entity of material flesh that forms your body. In relation to the lower field, the wholeness of your body forms the organism (the

larger enveloping dimension), while the lower field is the body. Daoists believe that the human body is a material organism which receives essence and *qi* from heaven and earth, which it closely resembles. Just as heaven and earth contain the sun and moon, people have two eyes. Just as heaven and earth have four seasons, people have four limbs. The head is round and resembles heaven; the feet are square and match earth.

To stabilize the body, you need to work with your physical form, using either internal or external methods, that is, one that works with the internal body form, the other with the external. You work internally to stabilize your inner form by silently circulating the five phases. First you breathe deep into the body, then you stabilize it internally. The outer physical form refers to the part of your body that is exposed, including the five sense organs, two hands, four limbs, as well as all the skin and pores. Master Lü said: "The physical form cannot be in excess, spirit cannot be deficient. If the physical form is in excess, it is rigid; if spirit is deficient, it is weak."

In practice, do not deliberately manipulate your physical form since if it gets to be in excess, the spirit will be in deficiency. When exchanging *qi* with nature, do not walk deliberately. When sitting in meditation and spirit is deficient, lie down. Anytime spirit is deficient, your physical form will not look good. The human spirit and form are highly mysterious. After spirit manifests in people's physical form, they experience countless permutations. Therefore, through form and spirit you can see people's emotions. Make every effort to keep them together, then ask yourself whether the various emotions of joy and anger, grief and happiness are ultimately mental or physical in nature.

The relationship between spirit and form manifests in the *qi,* often described in terms of being sufficient or insufficient. However, this quality of *qi* is not what you think but appears in a halo around your body. Everyone is aware of this, but only few people can see its colors (aura). In fact, we often cannot see the exact complexion or color of a person sitting in meditation, walking, or moving about, but are quite clear about their the *qi* color or aura. What emerges here are the seven emotions and six desires. When someone gets angry, his *qi* color changes, also exhibiting true and fake aspects, so watch to see whether it changes. It is best if people keep their colors constant; that kind of *qi* looks great.

"*Qi* manifests the subtle changes of spirit in excess or repletion." This applies to Chinese healing, physiognomy, and Western medicine. *Qi* here does not refer to the breath but to an energy that rises from the physical form, which in turn reflects the spirit, manifesting it layer by layer. Color signifies the outermost layer, apparent in people's complexion, appearance, and countenance. Moving further inside, *qi* also determines the physical form. From there, it moves further inside to manifest in the body and flesh. The body's periphery shows so much: if the *qi* is in disorder, spirit is in chaos. Once spirit is in chaos, the physical form is disturbed. Ideally, and most subtly, spirit should pervade the entire body. When you get angry, spirit rises up, but let it pass quickly.

To stabilize the body, first focus the mind in sitting meditation. That is, you stabilize your physical organism by sitting strong and stable. Sit in meditation and start to steady your breathing. As you do so, check whether this steadying is good or bad and start to look at your body. The body manifests in the physical form, which in turn is apparent in the *qi*. If the *qi* is balanced, it becomes visible in the color.

Body and spirit are closely related. The outward manifestation of your body is your physical form. You can see whether someone's posture while sitting is good or bad from looking at his or her physical form, but this in turn is a manifestation of their *qi*. Looking at that, you can see just how big or small the *qi* is, how narrow or wide its field, how good or bad its aura. You can also do this for yourself. Sit in stillness and observe the color right around your body and that beyond it. The human aura divides into many layers, showing red, yellow, blue, white, black, and more. Within the color, moreover, there is a flavor, which directly affects all the other dimensions.

Everyone's inner body has this flavor, which identifies your attitude towards others, whether you like it or not. Flavor has the greatest effect on the heart-and-mind, spirit, physical form, *qi,* color, and more. So when you sit in meditation, make sure to recover you original color and flavor so you can achieve your best level of being human. In the meditation hall, when *qi* and flavor are heavy, you have a hard time sitting. The flavor of the body changes as you sit, going along with the *qi*. If the *qi* is clear, the flavor is delicious; it the physical form is wondrous, the flavor is sweet; if the body is upright, the flavor is pleasant.

As you sit in meditation and steady your body, this body is the main manifestation of spirit. If spirit is sufficient, the body is upright; if it is deficient, the body checks out, so make sure spirit is not deficient. Actually, spirit should be more than just sufficient, so the body stays malleable and will not get stiff. Spirit resides in the heart-and-mind (not the heart of the cardiovascular system) and is responsible for your overall attitude. If your attitude (spirit) is not good, the guiding instructions will not get through. If we have to repeat the instructions, the flavor of the guiding instructions is no longer good, and there is no way to sit in meditation. Balancing the flavor thus aids the function of heart-and-mind, spirit, physical form, *qi,* and color.

Once there is something wrong with the guiding instructions, look to see if there is something wrong in your heart-and-mind, spirit, physical form, *qi,* or color; find out where it impacts the most. Let the *qi* rise from the bladder to the liver. Actually it has started to ascend by itself rather than being allowed to rise. This is because we do not have the five kinds of vision (they are seeing though flesh, heaven, wisdom, dharma, and Dao). Also, maybe the five kinds of vision are not enough, but still there is something in the bladder that is worth moving. At this time there may be a change in color, *qi,* physical form, body, and spirit, all the way to your overall attitude. In someone working within the internal field, it may form a kind of *qi* flow. In someone working more with the periphery, it may

lead to a certain edginess, which is also nothing but a change in flavor. When the flavor changes, the color (aura) changes; and when that changes, *qi* changes, too. These things are determined by your life force. Life force is key: it can distinguish between genuine and fake.

Pore breathing brings the *qi* from outside into the body, and once inside it circulates to the lower field. As the lower field slightly vibrates, let the breathing follow the movement of the pores: this is called listening to and following the breath. This is the old and proven method to check the level of your accomplishment, so try to maintain it for a long time. At this time, you no longer use your ears to listen but activate your inner sense organ. Inhale when you feel the pores contract; exhale when you feel them expand. This is the best way to transit from the methods of attracting immortality to those in the *Lingbao bifa* and also the reason why it is not easy to study these methods. They are basic exercises that yet lead to subtle and mysterious skills that allow you to draw primordial spirit inside and move the conscious spirit in from outside.

By breathing in this manner, you form a universe within. To move on from the methods of attracting immortality to the practice of the Three Immortals, the most important meditation is eliminating the six roots (of the senses). Speaking from the way ordinary people watch things, when they close their eyes, they cannot see anything on the outside, which is one way to eliminate one of the roots. However, you still know what is happening outside, because your ears can still hear. When the eyes look but cannot see the outside world, the ears immediately pick up their function. You can use the ears to feel and observe. So, make sure to focus your ears back into your body. Once your hearing is reversed, the nose will become the primary sense organ. So, next you must seal the nose, which causes the mouth to be become active. The six roots of the senses work by identifying color, sound, taste, touch, etc. They are the source of all the problems that cause issues in life, so you must change them.

From here, pay attention to the sense orifices, "the clever orifices—so subtle and so wondrous!" If your work is not subtle and you cannot find the opening, we speak of withered practice, because people become dry and withered. Build your foundation well, so you have the capacity and skill to cultivate inside and silently circulate the five phases.

After you turn your vision inward, there is one more place to illuminate, and that is the abdomen. To turn your vision inward, you need to silently circulate the five phases with the goal of finding the heavenly heart in the abdomen. There is more than one heavenly heart. According to the *Zhenwu pian* (Awakening to Reality) by Zhang Ziyang from the Southern School, the heavenly heart refers to a center in the abdomen. However, Wang Chongyang in the *Wupian lingwen* speaks of it being in the head and only later refers to it in the abdomen.

After building the foundation, you silently circulate five phases to let the energy focus in the lower field. Once the *qi* is fully there, you have completed the various methods of attracting immortality.

For final cleansing, make sure the body is empty. When the body is empty, the entire organism is free and open. Now stop moving and just wait patiently. There is no more body and you feel that the entire body and organism are gone. This state is called being empty yet not empty, completely without motion. Daoists speak of existence and nonexistence, but then, what exactly does exist? You have no clue. If you say there is nonexistence, but you are still there, this is precisely the Daoist point. At this time, there is a possibility that something new is produced or something starts to descend. Where do you go from here, again you do not know, therefore it is important to wait.

Chapter Fourteen A

Cultivation in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*

The *Lingbao tong zhineng neigong shu* describes various Daoist methods on how to cultivate inner nature and life-destiny as well as how to concoct the golden elixir in some detail. The first part of the text, by Masters Zhongli and Lü, the *Lingbao tong*, comes from the *Lingbao bifa* and focuses on extending life-destiny. The second part by Lü Dongbin, the *Zhineng neigong shu*, goes back to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* and deals with refining inner nature. Both combine to form this work. The combination of both is called the *Lingbao tong zhineng neigong shu*. Methods in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* include those of wisdom and potential as well as calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

The cultivation of inner nature begins with work on the internal lines as defined by Master *Lü*. According to the records, he had 3,000 disciples but only properly understood the cultivation of the internal lines after 800 had already died. Daoists developed the system of the internal lines in preparation for calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice and as the foundation of the refinement of inner nature and life-destiny.

Picking herbs, concocting an elixir, refining the yin and yang spirit, and even the practice of the Three Immortals and women's alchemy are inseparable from calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. By this technique you know the location of spirit's entry (Heavenly Eye point) and can become aware of internal and external ingredients. Later these methods were transmitted among mountain hermits and their disciples, which is why hardly anyone has heard of them.

Master Wang Chongyang, one of the five northern masters, founded the Complete Perfection school. It made refining inner nature and reaching enlightenment its primary goal. First you must develop a clear mind to see your true inner nature, then you refine essence, stem *qi*, and spirit. Cultivating inner nature is the beginning of enlightenment, in the same way that one starts with practicing the internal lines and calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. These methods are preserved in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*.

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* is also known as the king of all elixir texts. The crux of its teachings deals with the entire process of Daoist alchemy. It describes the process of concocting external elixirs as a metaphor for the practice of making internal elixirs (from your own body resources). In practice, it de-

scribes the Daoist process of installing the furnace, setting up the cauldron, and gathering the ingredients in order to concoct the elixir of immortality. The metaphor is fully reflected within the immortality practices on the human level: "use the body as the furnace, stem *qi* as the main ingredient, the heart-and-mind as fire, and the kidneys as water" – this contains its essential meaning.

The various techniques of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* match the forty-five sections of the *Lingbao bifa*, closely linking with each other and forming ten steps in total. They divide into ten steps, of which we introduce the first four:

I. Strongly open the Heavenly Eye; with a clear mind see your true inner nature.
1. Intentionally circulate the spirit light
2. Strongly open the Heavenly Eye
3. Water and Fire interchange
4. The three luminaries (sun, moon, stars) come together

II. Calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, revert the light, and guard the life force.
1. Revert the light and guard the life force
2. Rotating the sun and moon [eyes]
3. The sun and moon unite
4. Life force coagulates at the mysterious opening

III. Focus spirit in the Cavity of *Qi,* practice civil and martial cleansing.
1. Drop the curtain and revert the light
2. Produce ingredients in the Kun Palace
3. Steady the breathing and undergo cleansing
4. Let the light coagulate into a small pearl

IV. Turn your vision inward for inner reflection, circulated and transform the five phases
1. Let spirit guide the small pearl
2. Circulate and transform the five phases
3. Merge spirit and life force into oneness
4. Nurture the dragon pearl

I. Strongly Open the Heavenly Eye, With a Clear Mind See Your True Inner Nature

1. Intentionally Circulate the Spirit Light

Sit on a flat surface. Sit with both legs crossed (natural, half lotus, or full lotus, but preferably natural), palms down, and fingers spread apart. Gently put them on your knees and relax the entire body. Raise your head and let the eyes look straight ahead. Open your eyes and look into the distance, the farther the better.

Gradually place your intention in the far distance. Now the intention is very far in the distance. Slowly pull it back to between the eyebrows and gently close your eyes.

Next, focus the mind in sitting meditation. To do so, steady the breath, making it soft, even, and long. Breathe in and out evenly. While steadying the breath, breathing in the lower abdomen should follow breathing through the nose. Slow down the frequency and pull the abdomen in slowly while breathing in. Steady the breath until it is perfectly even so your body and mind can settle down. Continue steadying the breath, breathing slow and even. On the one hand, steady the breath; on the other, check that you are sitting properly, making sure your body has a suitable position. Then slow down the breathing yet again.

Relax the entire body: shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands. Keep the spine straight and your lips gently closed, teeth lightly touching, the tongue pushed against the upper palate, and the chin tucked.

Steady the breath again, make it soft, even, and long. Breathe in and out evenly. Slow down the frequency and keep on steadying it until you feel the *qi* within. The breath flows right through the acupuncture point Human Center (GV 26, below the nostrils). There are both an opening and an open space here: merge these into one. Your body and mind are now even more stable. From here, draw spirit into your heart. Let your eyes look inside your body universe and look inside your own body. Look inside and observe the changes in the body. Make spirit return to the body. Now the eyes are looking within the body; at the same time, spirit and intention are inside.

Once again return to steadying the breath, making it soft, even, and long. The breath is even in duration both in and out; you do not move your physical form. Use the internal breathing wisely. Start by holding the breath at the nose to get internal breathing moving. The pores will slowly settle down. See if the open space within which surrounded by the body's pores can move on its own. Do not use internal energy to move it. Spend a moment experiencing the feeling inside your skin as well as your hair and pores on the outside. Feel if the skin, the open space within, or the internal organs can move.

Now again steady the breath and draw spirit deeper into to your body. Inhale and lift your front genital area lightly to see if there is any connection. Inhale softly and start the internal movement of the lower abdomen as you breathe in. Feel the tiny movement inside the lower abdomen and slow down its frequency. When practicing this, the outer form of the lower abdomen does not move: all the movement is inside. Move within the abdomen, feel the tiny movement in the lower abdomen and softly lift it up.

Once again steady the breath, make it soft, subtle, and long, paying attention to the inside. Let it go then look at your head, chest and abdomen. Empty the entire body then let it move. Slowly inhale and exhale.

Now increase the rate of breathing, see if the inside can move. Then slow down the breathing as you keep looking inside the body. Slowly turn your breath into just breathing, then don't pay attention to it any more, just relax. You want to steady your body universe to become one with the celestial universe. It is best to add the space of the practice room too and bring three spaces into one.

Again steady the breath. This time let the breathing from your nose drive the internal breathing, which is the breathing inside the body. While breathing, it is best that the pores do not open or close. The internal breathing pushes the movement within the body's spaces. Keep the eyes looking inside the body.

Once again steady the breath and strengthen the intention. Strengthening the intention allows you to also increase the ability to focus spirit. In order to strengthen your ability to focus spirit, pull it back into your body. The breathing is inside the body and inner space. You need to find or think up a way to make the inner space breathe and start moving. Then slow down the breathing frequency. Steady your breathing, inhale deep and long and exhale short and fast, until your body gently warms up.

Now spirit is within your body. Again steady the breath, slow down the breathing and once again steady body and mind. Once more slowly pull spirit back into your body. Track spirit closely with the eyes when focusing it. The eyes return to look inside the universe of the body.

Now release spirit to the outside and think about how big the entire practice space is, what is its shape? Release spirit from inside the body to the outside. Think again about how big the practice space is, what is its shape? This time consider its six sides: front, back, left, right, up, and down. Use the conscious spirit to lead the primordial spirit, and use your intention to guide the conscious spirit. At this time spirit is not inside the body, it is outside. Think about the entire practice space, envision it very carefully and clearly. And this time, only the pores are breathing.

Immediately think about your external shape – can you see something? Let the pores drive the breathing in your present space. Inhale and gather the entire space toward the inside through the pores; exhale and let the pores release. Inhale and the pores focus inside; exhale and the pores expand out. Gradually slow down the frequency. Feel that the body is suspended in the air, don't forget your bottom. You are suspended in empty space. At this time your inner space is breathing, and spirit is outside the body.

Gradually draw spirit back into your practice space. Now spirit is not inside the body, it is outside. Now project spirit to one flat surface (top, bottom, etc.) in the space. Think about how many people are in this practice space. (How many people are in one space?) What are their positions? What do they look like? Think about the people around you, be very clear about it.

Slowly move your attention from the space to one of the flat surfaces and remember that there are four directions: front, back, up, and down. You are

moving from a round space to a flat plane. At this time your space is still breathing: it is called internal breathing. Next inhale and focus the *qi* from all around—your chest, back, shoulders, and arms—into the central line. This is the central line from Hundred Meeting (top of the head) to Meeting Yin (perineum), running through the upper, middle and lower spaces. As you inhale, draw the *qi* from the body toward the middle; as you exhale, slowly relax it out. Feel that you are centering your body in a single line.

Gradually pull spirit in through the pores again. People have 84,000 pores, forming the edge of body universe. At this time the inner space is still breathing, but the pores are not moving. Next, envision that there is a small space above the flat surface: your body universe. Spirit has already come from the universe toward you, resting in your pores, at the edge of the body universe. Now think about your physical form and your appearance.

Think about the pores and edge of your body: what is the shape of this edge? Moving from a flat surface to the individual, each person forms a small universe. At this time, the breath is used to shrink the body. Breathing in, let the body shrink; breathing out, let body expand. As you inhale, your entire body becomes smaller and smaller; as you exhale, your entire body slowly expands. Inhale and exhale like this. While breathing, you can steady yourself according to the movement of the pores, but do not breathe too fast because the pores need to move faster than the breath.

Carefully consider your physical form (your outline) for a moment. Look at it slowly from top to bottom, examining your physical form without omitting anything. Think about your head, chest, abdomen, and limbs; do not forget your bottom. At the present time maintain your intention outside the body, it is necessary to think about this clearly. It is necessary to think of the front, back, left, right, up and down. Every one of us is an individual, think about yourself clearly.

Draw spirit slowly back inside the body, receive it into your body's space. Now spirit is in the body, spirit is back inside, back to your body. At this time, the eyes are looking inside. The eyes and spirit are inside the body. Look inside, see if there are any changes inside the body universe. Now spirit is back inside the body. Pay attention to your breath, inhale and out evenly. Now the breathing is natural.

Return to inspecting the inside, what is the shape of the inside. Pay attention to the space of the head, chest and abdomen, look inside to see if a space is really there. The body as a whole is empty, it has an outer form and you can shrink it back toward the middle. Then steady the breathing and breathe internally. The pores do not move, neither do skin, muscles, and bones, only the inner spaces are moving.

Forget the arms and legs. Move the spaces to empty the entire body, then slowly turn breathing into natural breathing (without conscious intention). The eyes look inside the body to see the changes in the body universe. The ears

listen to the sound. Check to see if your spaces are able to move by themselves. Only by turning your vision inward can you know if the spaces are moving. The movement of the breath follows that of the spaces. Slowly let your breathing become natural and without conscious intention.

Check inside the body universe to note what big spaces exist in the body. Consider again, what is the shape of your inner spaces? From the head and chest to the abdominal space, let the three spaces become one and feel them move as you breathe. Do not move the edge of the body universe nor the body's pores, just move the inside of the body. Strengthen your intention and let the conscious spirit lead the primordial spirit, the breath lead the inner breath. It is best if you can breathe from the middle of the body.

Turn your vision inward to see what is within your body universe. As you look inside, there should be a noticeable breath: this is the breath of the body universe. Breathing in, the interior of the body contracts as a whole; breathing out, the interior releases as a whole. Inhale and look in; exhale and think of a way to let the spaces move. Steady the breathing for a while, then slowly turn it into breathing with no conscious intention.

Steady the breathing to be soft, even, and long, as well as slow. Now the intention of breathing is inside the body, in the body universe. Empty the entire body, steady the breathing frequency, inhale slow and exhale fast, then breathe slowly, and return to natural breathing. Right now, feel the body getting slightly warmer. At this moment, let the breathing from the nose drive the movement of lower abdomen and pores.

Now spirit is inside the body. The eyes turn inward to see what changes have occurred in the body universe. Prepare to do pore breathing: this exercise is to expand the practice space through pore breathing. What is called expansion is defined as the body universe expanding its threshold. This process allows the conscious spirit to come into contact with the primordial spirit. This expands the conscious spirit and increases your awareness. Now spirit is in the body.

There are several layers of attention: Breathing in, the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions squeezes all the pores; breathing out, the *qi* from all the pores goes out into all four sides and eight directions. Think about your space: Inhale, focus on the body; exhale, release. Inhale, all the pores slowly shrink; exhale, all the pores slowly expand. Inhale, the whole space of the practicing field focuses inside; exhale, release it. Inhale, all the pores get smaller and smaller and focused inside; exhale, the pores expand and the entire body gets larger. Inhale, your inner space gets smaller; exhale, it gets larger. Inhale, the body universe gets smaller; exhale, it gets larger.

Inhale, all the pores (comprising the body) get smaller as a whole. In fact, when breathing out, the smaller your spaces get, the larger the body would be, large enough to fill the entire room of the practice space. Your inner spaces and pores are becoming larger, and so does your body as a whole. At this mo-

ment, do not forget your hands, arms, head, back, and legs, including your front and rear genital areas along with the perineum. They are all focused inside, do not omit any area.

Inhale, all the pores pull inward; exhale, all the pores push out. Inhale, the intention is on the pores, slowly focus inside the body; exhale, release the entire body. Inhale, focus on all the pores as they get smaller and smaller; exhale, release them and let them get larger and larger. Strengthen the intention and continue to release to the outside, release it very big. Inhale, focus on all the pores as they get smaller, so small that the legs and feet are inside; exhale, all the pores expand. Feel that they are becoming quite large. Inhale, let the pores move; exhale, expand all the pores. It is best to feel that the *qi* rises up like steam from the body when breathing in and that the substance in the inner space turns into *qi* when breathing out. Inhale, take the essence and transform it into *qi*; exhale, the entire body gets hot. It is also best if the *qi* rises up to the head. Breathing in, focus in the body which gets hot; breathing out, release the entire body.

Inhale, all the pores get smaller and smaller, including every part of the body. The body also gets smaller and smaller, focus smaller. Exhale, all the pores gets larger and larger, the entire body gets larger, let it out and fill into the whole space. Pay attention to the changes in the spaces: inhale, focus inside the body, so does the sitting bones of the legs, perineum, shoulders and arms. Draw inside from the edges of the body universe. Exhale, all the body slowly releases outward.

The inner space is a closed space. The whole inner space focuses inward while breathing in and releases while breathing out. While breathing in, spirit is inside the body; while breathing out, the entire body releases. Inhale, sit inside your inner space; exhale, the entire body releases. Breathe in, curl up inside the closed space; exhale, the entire space expands. Breathe in, pay attention to the three yin (anus, genitalia, and perineum), lift them up, and seal them. Exhale, the front genital area and the perineum release. Feel that your inner space breathes like a mouth.

Taking it farther, while breathing in, all the pores and the body slowly focuses inside. Move the body, focus it inward and lift the genital area. Feel the entire body is rising up. While breathing out, all the pores and the entire body slowly release, spirit is inside the body. Inhale, all the pores focus inside, the sitting bones slowly lift and the entire body rises up. Feel that the entire person moves up as you breathe in and release all the pores as you exhale.

After a period of steadying, let the breathing follow the movement of the pores: closing the pores, inhale; open the pores, exhale. Change the order, let the movement of the pores follow after the breath: Inhale, pores close; exhale, pores open. Let the pores' movement follow your natural breathing, then again let your natural breathing promote the pores' movement. At this time, your

inner spaces must have power in order to have the capacity to empty your entire body completely.

Find a way to move the pores, do not stop in the middle of breathing. Continue breathing so that the pores can move and the body can empty itself. Turn your vision inward, then drive the breathing of the pores with natural breathing. At this time, pay attention: sometimes the breathing of the spaces and pores goes in different directions. Relax and let the breathing be natural. Now pay attention to the pores only. Is the breathing of the spaces and pores moving in opposite directions?

First check if your pores can move along with the breath and vice versa. Stop breathing for a moment, pushing the pores with your inner *qi* and let the pores move your entire space. Look if your space can move, that is if the upper, middle, and lower parts of each space can move, then unify the movement of the three parts.

Now spirit is inside the body. Slowly stabilize the pores and let them settle down. At this time, the body universe and the cosmic universe have become one and are in the same space. Breathing turns into natural breathing. Right now, the lower abdomen may still move, do not pay attention to it. Steady the breath, now it is natural breathing. Feel if everywhere is moving along with natural breathing, and let the lower abdomen become serene.

Now spirit is inside the body, which is the space of the body universe. In your heart-and-mind there is a "me," that is, the real me is in the space of the body universe. The body is temporary, it is but a form of existence.

Then examine if the upper, middle, and lower spaces are moving together. Gently drive the movement of the pores and spaces by breathing through the nose. There are two forces: an internal one called "internal stem *qi*" and one outside the pores called "external *qi,*" described in the elixir scriptures. Breathe slowly, steady natural breaths, soft, even, and long, in and out at the same rate. Then, since the entire body has been moving, let it relax and find a way to slowly stabilize the inner space and pores. Pay attention to the changes inside and slowly let them stabilize. Gradually let the breathe turn into natural breathing.

Then steady the breathing again. Breathing in and out through the nose, let this breathing drive the slow movement of the lower abdomen. Slow down the natural breathing, making it soft, even, and long, smoothly moving in and out. Slow down the breathing frequency again and relax the entire body. Pull spirit inside the body and slowly settle down the pores.

Next bring spirit back, bring it into the body. Now spirit is in the body, do not let it out. Then steady the breathing so it is soft, subtle, and long. While steadying the breathing, the eyes turn your vision inward toward the inside of the head. Look up, see the highest point of the body which is the Crown Gate and Hundred Meeting, you might a see faint light. First check the space of the

head: How large is it? What is its shape? Then look from the top of the head space and down from there. Feel as if the body is sinking down.

Use the eyes to carry the internal stem *qi* slowly down, between the eyebrows. Going down farther, reach the nose and mouth; continue down farther, reach the Twelve-storied Tower (throat). Slowly go down to the chest, the center of the torso, the space of the chest, and examine the area. From here, slowly let the intention move down farther, reaching the abdominal space. Go down to the navel and from there to the lower abdomen. Continue going down farther to the perineum, which is the bottom of the body.

Slightly pause at the perineum, inhale and lift the *qi* up to the lower field, then focus in the lower abdomen. Inhale, focus in the abdomen; exhale, slowly release it. Feel the lower abdomen expand and turn your vision inward to the lower field. After breathing with the lower abdomen several times, inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, release it. The lower field and lower abdomen move together following the breath. Breathing in, focus in the lower abdomen; breathing out, release it, lower abdomen slowly releases out. Continue practicing until the breathing follows the movement of lower field. Focus in the lower field on the inhale; release lower field and exhale.

Then push the movement of the lower field with breathing, turn your vision inward toward the lower field. Slowly turn the breath into natural breathing. Now both eyes turn your vision inward toward the lower field, both ears listen to the sound inside the lower field. Pay attention to any changes in it. Slightly lower your head, exhale, the body must sink and breathing should be soft, subtle, and long. Now, the intention and eyes are in the lower field, the ears listen to the inner tone of the lower field, slowly stabilize the lower field. After the lower field settles down, slowly begin natural breathing.

Explanation

Inhale with some force into the lower abdomen; exhale and release it. Inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, release it. Relax the lower abdomen and push the *qi* from the lower field to the bladder, circulating the five phases without using the hands. After the *qi* has passed through the five phases and returned to the lower field, let the breathing follow the lower field, let it push the lower field. Slowly turn breathing into natural breathing, turn your vision inward toward the lower field, the ears listen to the sound of the lower field. If you want to concentrate on cleansing feel free to extend the length of your practice.

Then stabilize the breathing, making it soft, even, and long. Turn your vision inward to observe the changes inside the body universe and let your ears listen to the sounds inside. Spirit must be returned inside. Pay attention to the time of the season and the location you are in.

Turn your vision inward, close the eyes and listen to the inside. Concentrate on the task of sitting meditation, purify the heart and spirit. Use your body universe to sense the universe outside. Sense the cosmic universe with your

body universe. Spirit is inside the body, but feel that it is beyond the body too. Feel the celestial bodies. Eyes turn your vision inward and observe the changes of the body universe, ears listen to the sound inside the human universe. Then relax, feel the entire body sinking. Breathing should be soft, subtle, and long. Spirit and intention is inside the body. Find trends of movement within the body. Then slow down the breathing frequency, inhale fast, exhale slow. Let the breathing from the nose drive the breathing outside the body (breathing with pores) and inside the body, it should be shallow, subtle, and long. Find a way to inhale fast and exhale slow. Let the *qi* out of the head on the exhale. Inhale, relax the entire body, feel it sink. Make sure the head area feels very bright.

Then slow down the breathing, inhale, tighten the body softly; exhale, relax the body and feel the body sinking. Now spirit is inside the body, exhale, let all the *qi* in the body get out, let it all out. Feel the body sinking, empty all the breath. Relax the entire body, eyes looking in; exhale, relax and feel the entire body is sinking. Slowly let your body enter a half-sleep state, but spirit stays very conscious.

Sit in meditation for a while, deal with inherent distractions of the mind and begin to focus the heart-and-mind to concentrate on your sitting meditation. Clear your mind, be empty yet not empty:

Relax your body, purify your heart and life force. Sit in meditation for a while, steadying body, breath, and mind. Concentrate on your sitting meditation, so that you are still and relaxed. Now you are breathing naturally. At this stage, yin drops and all things inside the body are slowly moving down. This is one of the processes of stabilization. Wait until the body gets a little cold and there is no warmth inside. Wait until you are comfortable before building the foundation through breathing. Remember let it go down slowly, turn your vision inward to observe the changes in the body universe. Spirit does not leave the body.

Pay attention and concentrate on sitting meditation. Turn your vision inward and look up, observing the area of the Hundred Meeting and the Crown Gate. Then slowly move the intention down to your nose. Turn your vision inward and observe your nose. Now you are ready to inhale and exhale through the nostrils. The head is heaven; the abdomen is earth; turn ordinary into perfect breathing. After practicing sitting meditation for some time, conclude the process of lowering yin. Slowly pull spirit back inside the body.

The physical form remains completely still and unmoving. Relax the entire body: shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands while holding the spine straight. Keep your lips gently closed, teeth lightly touching, and the tongue pushed against the upper palate. Wait for the entire body to be relaxed and the mind clear, deep, and without ripples, keeping the chin tucked.

Steady the breathing. Inhale and exhale through the nose in ordinary fashion. Use nostril breathing to steady the breath. Stabilize the inhalation through

the nose until it is soft, even, and long. Each inhalation and exhalation has to be even. Slow down the breathing and pull spirit back inside the body. Steady the breathing to soft, subtle, and long. Pull spirit slowly while steadying the breath. Slow it down, pull it back, and your vision inward. Spirit is inside the body.

Now steady the breath and slow it down. Thus ordinary will turn into perfect breathing, which you can then use to drive the movement of the lower abdomen. Inhale, lead the breath through the nose to lower field and gently focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale, let the lower abdomen release and gently distend. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, let the abdomen release. Gradually, the lower abdomen begins to move. You must move the lower abdomen and do this a few times. At this time, the movement of the lower abdomen should not be too fast or big. Stabilize our body and mind and pull spirit back into the body.

Turn your vision inward and observe the head, looking up slightly. Look up to see the highest point of the body which is the Hundred Meeting and the Crown Gate. You should see light in your head, if you are practicing it right. Look inside, slowly move the intention down, concentrating it on your nose: turn your vision inward and observe your nose. Get ready to breathe through the nose. The breathing should be soft, even, and long, smoothly moving in and out.

To breathe through the nose, gradually strengthen the intention, keeping it on the nose. Pay attention to the breath through the nose, in and out smoothly. Breathing should be soft, even, and long. Inhale, slowly in; exhale, slowly out. Inhale, strengthen the intention; exhale, the intention is on the nose. Slow down the breathing frequency again. Always be aware that you are breathing through the nose. Inhale, let the breathing push the abdomen gently inside; exhale, release the abdomen gently out. Make the head's orifices of brightness very bright.

To breathe from the pores of the head, inhale and move the intention to the pores of the head; exhale, let the pores release. Note several things: inhale, the pores of the head focus inward; exhale, they release. Inhale, the pores of the head slowly suck in; exhale, slowly let them out. Inhale, the pores of the head get smaller and smaller; exhale, they get larger and larger. Inhale, strengthen the intention; exhale, the intention is on the head pores; inhale, let the head pores move; exhale, release them.

Breathe like this several times. Inhale, seal the ears; exhale, release the ears. Focus on the ears and release them several times as you breathe, then breathe from the pores several times. Inhale, slowly focus inside the head; exhale, the pores slowly release out. Let the pores of the head move, feel the head shrink and grow, do this for some time. Inhale, focus on the head pores getting smaller and smaller, exhale, let the pores get larger and larger. Focus on the ears several times to close the ears: inhale, focus on the ears; exhale, let the ears release,

then breathe with the pores for a few times. Inhale, the head gets smaller and smaller; exhale, the head gets larger and larger.

Keep on breathing in and out through the nose as you slowly move the intention down to the lower field. Inhale, allow the intention to move down along the midline; exhale, move it to the lower field. Inhale, gently focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale, release it. Throughout, keep your body completely motionless, the only thing that moves is inside the lower abdomen. Gradually strengthen the intention, so that ordinary respiration turns into perfect breathing. Breathe longer and more slowly, let the lower abdomen move gently with your breathing. You have multiple intentions: inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, let the lower abdomen out. Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen, turn your vision inward and view the lower field; exhale, slowly release it. Inhale, let the lower abdomen move; exhale, release it. Inhale, strengthen the intention; exhale, the intention stays at the lower field.

Like an iron ox plowing the field, the lower field is trained. To achieve this, maintain uninterrupted breathing and allow the lower abdomen to be set in motion. Gradually strengthen the breathing in the lower abdomen. Inhale, focus here; exhale, release. Make sure to breathe very slowly. After several cycles, gradually strengthen the breathing of the lower abdomen. Inhale, use force focusing in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. At this moment, the force of the movement is quite powerful. Do this a few times, so the lower abdomen can move.

To seal the three yin, as you inhale and focus in the lower abdomen, become aware of your front genital area. Inhale, lift the anus and the front genital area, then focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release the lower abdomen and the front genital area at the same time. As you move the front genital area, there should be a sensation in the anus. Inhale, lift the anus muscles, then move the front genital area by lifting it and focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release the lower abdomen and front genital area. After doing this a few times, the lower three yin are sealed. But pay attention, slow down the breathing frequency, in and out evenly so that the lower abdomen moves. At this time, inhale, then lift the anus muscles, followed by the front genital area. Focus on the two thighs lifting up, raising yourself while focusing inward. Exhale, release the lower abdomen and the front genital area. Sink the body, letting the lower abdomen move. Inhale, make the intention stronger, keeping it in the lower abdomen. Practice a few more times.

To install the furnace and set up the cauldron, after sealing the lower three yin, become aware of all the pores, then add breathing from the pores. Install the furnace. Inhale, extract *qi* from all four sides and eight directions through the pores; exhale, release the *qi* through the pores into all four sides and eight directions. Inhale, focus the *qi* in the body; exhale, release it. This is how you install the furnace and set up the cauldron: practice this several times. After doing this action properly, the entire body should feel hot.

But pay attention: during breathing, do not forget to keep your focus inside the body. Inhale, lift the anus, focus first on the front genital area, then into the lower abdomen; exhale, release the lower abdomen and the entire body. Inhale, focus slowly on all the pores inside the entire body, letting it get smaller and smaller, not forgetting head and legs, also lifting up the thighs and the hip bones; exhale, let all the pores get larger and larger, all moving. Inhale, focus on the entire body as it gets smaller and smaller; exhale, the body grows larger and larger.

Strengthen the intention. Inhale, focus on the body, especially in the lower abdomen, and lift the sitting bones for a moment; exhale, release the lower abdomen and the entire body. Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, slowly release. Practice this a few more times. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen, especially the lower field; exhale, release. Inhale, gently focus in the lower field; exhale, gently release. Then inhale, increase the force of your movement in the lower field and lift the Meeting Yin point (perineum) for a moment; exhale, release the lower field. Practice this for a few times, letting the breathing follow the lower field and keeping your focus there. Inhale, release; exhale, focus. Then reverse, let the lower field follow the movement of breathing: inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, release it. Let the lower field move with natural breathing, allowing natural breathing push the movement of it. Turn your vision inward to see if there is a space and if it is moving. If so, that space is the lower field: find a way to move it.

Gently hold the breath, pushing the movement of the lower field with internal *qi* and driving it with the lower abdomen. Push both with your internal *qi*. Now the intention is in the lower field. Turn your vision inward to look inside your lower field. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release it. See if there is a space in the lower abdomen, then slowly settle it and gradually move to natural breathing.

Check that the furnace is upright (body is aligned straight). Once you feel it getting warm, start the practice. Inhale, stem *qi* is below the navel; exhale, stem *qi* does not rise past the heart.

To seal the furnace, as you inhale, stem *qi* moves down to the area below the navel; exhale, it rises up but not beyond the heart. After doing this several times, your body is the furnace. Check if the pores are sealed. Now, the furnace is sealed. After sealing the pores, slowly reduce the force of your breathing in the lower abdomen. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. Slowly reduce the force some more. Inhale, gently focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. Do this a few times. Inhale, gently focus in the body; exhale, release the entire body. Feel the force in the lower abdomen weaken little by little and slowly move into natural breathing. Now as you are breathing naturally, steady the breathing again making it very soft. You are breathing naturally. Steady the breathing again, making it soft, even, and long. Relax the entire body and keep

your intention in the lower field, in the lower abdomen. Turn your vision inward and observe the lower field. Both intention and spirit are there.

Notes

1. The body must be relaxed throughout the process and breathing must be even.

2. The lower abdomen must be moving. Abdominal force gradually increases and decreases with your breathing. It's important to master your ability to control the firing process.

3. These actions, including breathing through pores, lifting the anus, raising the front genital area, and focusing in the lower abdomen, are carried out simultaneously. Coordinate them with your breathing.

4. The intention behind this breathing process is one of gradual accumulation. The intensity of the lower abdomen's movement gradually increases and slowly decreases. After concentrating the mind in sitting meditation, use ordinary breathing to bring about perfect breathing, then gradually move the intention from the nose to the lower field.

5. After returning spirit to the lower field, there are two options: one is to form your hands into Eight Trigrams *Ziwu* and calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. When spirit enters the stem *qi* you can proceed to circulate the five phases. The second option is to first steady the breathing, then push the stem *qi* from the lower field into the bladder to start circulating the five phases, and after the five-phases *qi* returns to the lower field, calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

2. Strongly Open the Heavenly Eye

Wait for the breathing to become steady, raise your head with eyes closed and look ahead into the distance, gazing as far as possible. If you cannot see the light, use your imagination to send your intention out as far as possible. Now the intention is in the distance. See if the light is shining in the distance, see if it is bright. Gradually pull the spirit light from the distance, guiding it back to the opening of the Heavenly Eye, right between the eyebrows. Slowly focus it again, back to the Eye in the head, which is called the Niwan Palace. In ancient times, it was also called the upper elixir field. Move it slowly to reach the next point, known as heaven, which used to be called Postnatal Mirror. Look at this mirror and see what its shape is, how big it is, and if it shines or emits light.

After watching for a while, quickly project the point of light from the Postnatal Mirror and out from between the eyebrows. Project the intention from the inside to the outside. At this time, the speed must be fast, with eyes closed and looking ahead into the distance. Looking farther is better. Now the intention is in the distance. Take another look to see if something in the distance shines and emits light. Gradually bring back the spirit light from far away, back to the Heavenly Eye between the eyebrows. Slowly collect it to reach the

Eye in the head. Then slowly pull it to Heaven. Look in the Postnatal Mirror to see its shape and if it shines or emits light. Do this several times.

Notes

1. During one practice session, you should draw the inner nature line no more than three times and stay for a short period at each spot (Point, Eye, Heaven).

2. When looking into the distance with your eyes closed, if you cannot see into the distance, use your imagination to project the intention as far as possible. This way the intention is in the distance.

3. When bringing the spirit light back, take your time. It must not be done fast, so bring it back slowly. But you can release it out fast.

3. Water and Fire Intersect

After the third time of drawing the inner nature line, stay for a while at the Postnatal Mirror. From here, quickly bring the point down to Meeting Yin, drawing a line from top to bottom. At the same time, place your intention at the very bottom of the torso, the Meeting Yin point. Look at the shape of Meeting Yin. How big is it? In the old days, this was known as "hunting for treasure at the bottom of the sea." The Meeting Yin point is at the bottom of the torso, its lowest point. It is yang within yin. Let your eyes look inside and down, as you keep your intention at the very bottom of the torso. See if the Meeting Yin point shines and emits light.

Then quickly lift the *qi* from Meeting Yin up along the central channel all the way to Hundred Meeting. Look inside and up to examine the shape of the Hundred Meeting point. How big is it? Also, observe the four openings around it. The Hundred Meeting point is at the highest point of the entire body, the very top. Keep your intention here, at the highest point of the body, and do not let it out.

Quickly bring the point from Hundred Meeting down to Meeting Yin, always keeping your intention along. At the same time, look inside and down to Meeting Yin at the bottom of the torso, the lowest point of the genital area. Now look inside and down to see how big Meeting Yin is. What shape is it? Quickly bring the point from Meeting Yin to Hundred Meeting, as you look inside and up. Move the point back and forth three times between these two areas, the perineum and the top of the head, then move the spirit light to Meeting Yin and let your entire body relax.

Once your breathing is steady, lift your head, keeping the eyes closed, and look straight forward into the distance, reaching as far as possible. Project the intention along the inner nature line from the Heavenly Eye, then also see a line from Meeting Yin that reaches up at a 45-degree angle. See how the two intersect at a point in the distance. If you cannot see anything, use your imagination to project the intention as far as possible. Now the intention is in the

distance and you can see if the light is shining there, if it is bright. The two lines should intersect at a point in the distance, this is called the intersection of Water and Fire. Now the intention is in the distance, it has not come back yet.

Notes

1. Meeting Yin (the perineum) is at the bottom of the torso, it is yang within yin, at the very center of yin. It is at the lowest point of the entire body when seated.

2. Hundred Meeting is at the highest point of the body, the top of the head. Pay attention to the intention and do not let it get away. Around Hundred Meeting, there are four openings, which used to be known as the four gate keepers. Pay attention to these four points at this time.

3. The two lines, one from Meeting Yin at a 45-degree angle, the other the inner nature line from the Heavenly Eye, should intersect at a point in the distance. This is called the intersection of Water and Fire or of the trigrams Kan and Li in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. See if you can see their intersection point.

4. In the process of moving the spirit light between Hundred Meeting and Meeting Yin, the intention must keep up. You should stay for a short time in each of these two points.

5. After completing the intersection of Water and Fire, the intention is in the distance. At this time, form your hands into Eight Trigrams *Ziwu*. With the eyes closed, look into the distance, see if the spirit light shines or emits light. Gradually pull the spirit light back from the distance, draw it slowly toward the eyes and get ready to calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

4. The Three Luminaries (Moon, Stars) Come Together

Look ahead with your eyes closed, look into the distance. The intention is in the distance, it is not in the body. Then gradually pull the spirit light from the distance back, pulling it to the middle between the eyebrows. At this time, all three points (the two eyes and the Heavenly Eye) connect here. Gradually strengthen the intention, begin to breathe through the nose, steady the breathing to be soft, even, and long, moving smoothly in and out. Align the nose with the center line of the heart.

Following the breath, slowly move the intention down to the lower field. Slowly steady the breathing of the lower abdomen. As you follow the breath, slowly allow the lower abdomen to wake up. Inhale, gently focus the *qi* in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. The abdominal breathing frequency is slow, and you strengthen the lower abdomen little by little. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. Slowly steady it with breathing, so that the lower abdomen can move.

Drawing the broken line. After this, start internal breathing, using the external to guide the internal to draw the broken line. The specific method is to take the hands off the knees and keep them separate, with the fingertips of the

left hand pointing at those of the right. The palms face down when the breath moves down. Inhale, let the breath push down below the navel. When it reaches the lower field, turn your hands palms up. Move your hands up as you exhale, but do not let the *qi* rise up beyond the heart. Practice slowly. Inhale, let the breath go down and focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release the lower abdomen. The action must be slow. Practice a few more times, never failing to focus in the lower abdomen. Inhale, let the *qi* go down below the navel; exhale, let the breath rise up but not beyond the heart. If your fingertips become numb, immediately slow down the movement.

Silently circulate the five phases (to gather the ingredients). This also uses the external to guide the internal. Inhale, push down and let stem *qi* reach the lower field. At the same time, focus in the lower abdomen, stack your hands, palms facing in, and stroke inward over the lower field. Practice this a few times and thus start to gather the ingredients. Exhale, let your hands push the *qi* from the lower field into the bladder. At this time, exhale slowly. When the stem *qi* reaches the bladder, relax, stroke, pinch, pull, and then again stroke the bladder. When pulling, pay attention. Inhale while pulling it out; exhale while pressing it in.

After stroking the bladder, take a deep breath, take the *qi* of the bladder and deliver it to the liver. After it reaches the liver, exhale and relax, then stroke, pinch, pull, and again stroke the liver. Because the liver is relatively large, you can move the hands over several positions. After stroking the liver, take a deep breath, take the *qi* from the liver and deliver it to the heart. After the stem *qi* reaches the heart, exhale and relax, stroke, pinch, pull, then again stroke the heart.

Next, push the stem *qi* from the heart into the stomach. After it reaches the stomach, relax, stroke, pinch, pull, then again stroke the stomach. Take a deep breath, separate your hands, lift the *qi* up to the lungs. Exhale, relax the lungs and slowly stroke, pinch, pull, then again stroke the lungs. Notice that the lungs are big, so you can move the hands over several places. From here, push the *qi* from the lungs into the kidneys, relax and inhale. After it reaches the kidneys, stroke, pinch, pull, then again stroke the kidneys. Exhale, take the *qi* of the kidneys and deliver it to the bladder, inhale and relax. After it reaches the bladder, with hands stacked stroke, pinch, pull, then again stroke the bladder.

Take a deep breath, take the *qi* of the bladder and deliver it to the liver, silently circulating the five phases for a second time. When you finish this second round, deliver the *qi* back to the bladder. After stroking, pinching, pulling, then again stroking the bladder, take a deep breath, and take the *qi* of the bladder and deliver it back to the lower field. Focus in the lower abdomen as hard as you can. Exhale, release the lower abdomen and let the five-phases *qi* return to the lower field. Through this action you just delivered the ingredients into the lower field.

Draw the destiny-cultivation line. This again uses the external to guide the internal. After the stem *qi* of the five phases has returned to the lower field, let your palms point toward it. Relax as you breathe naturally and stroke the lower field, then draw it back and forth horizontally. When pulling it in, inhale and focus in the lower abdomen, letting hands move away from the abdomen. Exhale, let your hands press toward the abdomen while releasing it. Your breathing should be soft, even, and long. When pulling, pay attention that the palm's shape is hollow, not flat, at the same time, pay attention so that you experience feelings in the abdomen and coccyx. The time you spend on pulling can be longer. After pulling a few more times, slowly stroke the lower field again.

After stroking the lower field, the stem *qi* of the five phases returns here. Place the hands back on the knees, steady the body and breathe. Relax the entire body: shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands. Make sure the spine is straight. Keep your lips gently closed, teeth lightly touching, the tongue pushed against the upper palate, and the chin tucked. Then breathe through the nose to steady the breath, making it soft, even, and long, moving smoothly in and out. Gradually strengthen the intention on your nose.

From here, slowly move the intention down as you keep breathing through the nose. Guide it down to the lower abdomen and into the lower field. Inhale, gently focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release and let the abdomen move by itself. At this time, the lower abdomen is moving gently, so do not use force. Turn your vision inward toward the lower field, pay attention to any changes and see if there is a space. Also, do not forget to gently focus in the lower abdomen while breathing. Inhale, gently focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. Feel that the lower abdomen is gently moving. Again strengthen the intention, let the lower abdomen gently move with the breath. Let the lower abdomen move by itself. Turn your vision inward toward the lower field, slowly weaken the breathing into natural breathing.

Notes

1. When returning the spirit light back from the distance, if it is hard to focus it to the middle of the eyebrows, you should try focusing it in front of your eyes. At this moment, the eyes look straight ahead. During this practice the eyes are closed and are looking ahead gently.

2. After silently circulating the five phases to each organ, you must undertake these actions: stroking, pinching, pulling, and again stroking. Some organs are larger, such as the liver and lungs. At this time, constantly move the position of the hands while doing these actions, do not just move over one area. The action must be slow, if you feel your ten fingertips are numb, it means your movement is too fast, so slow down immediately.

3. When silently circulating the five phases and stroking each organ, the movement range of the hands should cover the entire organ. The hands should be moved over every place of that organ. During the pinching action, add a

little force to the hand, strengthen the intention. During the pulling action, pay attention to and cooperate with the breath. When pulling the palms away, inhale, when pressing them in, exhale. The breathing must be soft, smoothly in and out.

4. When silently circulating the five phases, move from one organ to another, pay attention to and coordinate movement with breathing. Keeping the breath long, inhale when you need to and exhale when you need to. Pay attention to and coordinate breathing with the hands. After reaching the next organ, relax immediately.

5. You can practice silently circulating the five phases several times. After the hands reaches an organ, you can increase the intention. Turn your vision inward toward this organ, see how big it is, what its shape is, and if it has become stem *qi*.

6. Skilled qigong practitioners or those who already have done some basic exercises can do this without using their hands. That means they do not use external actions to guide internal movement but instead use internal guidance and movement to silently circulate the five phases.

II. Calm Spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, Revert the Light, and Guard the Life Force

1. Revert the Light and Guard the Life Force

Holding your intention in the lower field, practice sitting meditation for a while, then form your hand into Eight Trigrams *Ziwu*. Breathe naturally, relax the body, shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands, keeping your spine straight. Keep your lips gently closed, teeth lightly touching, and the tongue pushed against the upper palate. Your head slightly bent, use natural breathing. Now the intention is in the lower field, which is the Kun Palace. First, use pore breathing to examine the entire body and see if all the pores are sealed. Inhale, the *qi* flows in through the pores, softly focus on your body. Exhale, release. The breathing must be slow. Do this a few times to see if the body pores are sealed properly and do not forget to check the head area. Slowly weaken the force of breathing and move into natural respiration. Now, the intention is on the pores of the body. Spirit returns to the lower field, along with the intention. Turn your vision inward to see the lower field, the eyes softly looking down and in. Thus, you watch the lower field.

To calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, lift the stem *qi* from the lower field, all the way up to your head. With the eyes closed, look into the distance, look as far as possible. If you cannot see anything, just keep looking out as far as possible. Push the intention out of the body rapidly. Now as the intention is in the distance, push spirit out there, too, and see if the light is shining, see if it emits light. After watching for a while, gradually pull the spirit light, moving

very slowly. Take it back to in front of your eyes and calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. Now the intention is in front of the eyes. Calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice requires the wise use of both eyes and the Heavenly Eye. Slowly pull the spirit light in front of the eyes. While doing so, the eyes slowly look to the middle, focusing on the center line, as if cross-eyed. Look at the middle until the eyes and the Heavenly Eye unite: the ancients called this "the sun and moon unite."

Check out if there is anything to look at or anything of substance in front of your eyes and see if you can see the spirit light. Let your eyebrows expand and relax, never using force, the body must also be relaxed. When you look, do not look too serious, you just need to look but not look, look slowly. Breathing should be soft, subtle, and long, relax the body when you exhale, let the entire body sink. Now the intention is in front of the head, do not turn your head to follow the spirit light. The spirit light is both in and out of the body, but at the same time, it is neither inside nor outside. Now, slow down the breathing again, make it soft, subtle, and long. Breathe evenly. Exhale, relax the body, open the hips and let the body sink down. Lift the *qi* up, now the intention is in front of the eyes, concentrate it here. Pay attention to the changes in front of the eyes.

Notes

1. After feeling the three points are all in a line, start breathing through the pores (focusing in the body). When pore breathing, examine whether the pores are sealed and do not forget the head. At the same time, breathe as slowly as possible. The field of the body universe should be able to expand freely whenever spirit is inside.

2. When you gaze forward and out, spirit is not in the body. Release spirit out so that it can bring back the light. At this time, lift the *qi* up from below and release it. When projecting the intention from the inside of the body to outside, the speed must be as fast as possible. That is, when the eyes are looking into distance, the action must be decisive. Also the intention must keep up, the intention must be fast too. When retrieving it, work as slowly as possible and pay attention to see if something is there and from where you can see the light. If you cannot see anything, imagine there is a point in front. Imagine there is something. At this time, spirit is neither in the body nor outside, it is in front of the eyes.

3. In ancient times, the eyes were called the sun and moon. The left eye is the sun, and the right is the moon. Use both to look toward the middle between them. On the one hand, you keep looking; on the other hand, you are bringing the vision of both eyes together to merge in one point. Only when the three points become one, can you see the spirit light.

4. Once you see the spirit light, pay attention and apply this passage from the *Qingjing jing*: "Use the universe in this body to sense the universe outside, let them respond to each other. If there is a master in your internal universe, the *qi*

of the outside universe flows into your body. If there is no master, the *qi* of the outside universe flows out and you cannot attain the Dao; on the contrary, you are diminishing it." Pay attention: You are totally in charge, so do not let the head follow the spirit light but let it come back by itself.

5. When calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, you need to relax the entire body with the spine straight and the chin tucked. Relax your eyebrows, do not use force and do not be too serious. Breathing should be soft, subtle, and long. Exhale, relax the entire body, open the hips and let your body sink down.

6. Only when the body relaxes and sinks down, can the *qi* can be lifted up. Do not change the position of your body. If it changes and the line that goes through the opening of the Heavenly Eye changes, you cannot see anything.

2. Rotating the Sun and Moon [Eyes]

If you cannot see the spirit light, slowly rotate your eyes. This is called "rotating the sun and moon" in the elixir scriptures. Rotate them slowly, clockwise or counterclockwise. After rotating them, there may be a direction in the periphery of your vision in which you can see the light. Pay attention to see which direction this is. After seeing the light, slowly pull it back, moving it toward the Heavenly Eye.

Notes

1. Rotating the sun and moon should be done very slowly. Carefully observe in which direction you can see the spirit light.

2. After seeing the spirit light, find a way to pull it into alignment with the inner nature line. At this time, keep your head still and unmoving, the body relaxed, and the eyebrows expanded.

3. In this process, do not practice too seriously and do not hurry. But observe carefully, handle it well, and do not push too hard.

3. The Sun and Moon Unite

After rotating the sun and moon and watching the spirit light, slowly steady both eyes. Do not push too hard when you pull the spirit light to the inner nature line. Slowly push the spirit light into the distance and slowly pull it back. Move the spirit light together again, so the three points become one. Practice until it gathers at a tiny point the size of a millet grain. This meets the required standard. The ancients called this "the sun and moon unite." At this time, you can see the spirit light.

Notes

1. Carefully note the place where the sun and moon unite. Then every time after this, you can calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice in this same area.

2. When the spirit light is in motion, manage it well, carefully experiencing its movement.

3. Throughout the process, properly use the Heavenly Eye and the inner nature line.

4. Pay attention to movements in your eye sockets: Pushing forward is to enlarge the orbit; collecting it is to contract the orbit, but in the beginning the eyes do not move.

4. Life Force Coagulates at the Mysterious Opening

Relax your body, do not hurry, and do not try too hard. Relax the eyebrows, do not worry about what you see but use your sense organs. After watching the spirit light arrive, let it settle and stop but do not let it slip away. If the spirit light moves, do not follow its movement, you need to have the imposing manner of an emperor. Now everything is scattered, but the spirit light will start to coagulate in the middle. Do not exert yourself: use spirit instead of physical force. Relax your entire body, lift the *qi* up, and raise both body and mind. Relax the eyebrows and do not frown. Slow down your breathing, making it soft, subtle, and long as you pay attention to any changes in front of your eyes. Whether you see it or not, slowly push the spirit light away into the distance. Slightly enlarge the eye socket, then slowly focus it a bit. Do not pull it too fast, be sure to slowly move it to your eyes. Find the appropriate distance between the spirit light and the Heavenly Eye.

Everything looks scattered in from of the eyes, but the spirit light will start to coagulate in the middle. Relax the entire body again, keeping your spine straight. Steady the breathing, make it soft, subtle, and long. Exhaling, let the entire body relax, feel your body sink. Now the intention is in front of the eyes. Pay attention to the changes. Breathe more slowly, slow down the breath, keeping the intention in front of the eyes. Do not lean your head forward but relax your shoulders and find the right position for the spirit light, then relax again. Feel your body is continuously sinking, but do not move.

If the sight you see is vague in front of your eyes but there is a large area of light, that means the spirit light is too close to you. Do not let it stick too close. If that happens, slowly steady both eyes again, but do not try too hard. Push it to the distance a bit, then slowly pull it. Push the landscape in front your eyes forward no matter whether you can see it or not. Enlarge your orbit softly. No matter if you are seeing sights or not, pull the light. Slowly pull the spirit light back to before your eyes: do not get stuck. As the eyes look to the middle, you find the distance between the spirit light and the Heavenly Eye.

Constantly work with the spirit light, then coagulate the scattered spirit light before your eyes toward the middle. The eyes look toward the middle. Move and gather the spirit light again, merge the three points into one. Continue gathering the light into a smaller point, until it reaches the size of a millet grain.

Notes

1. After seeing the spirit light, try not to let it slip away. If the spirit light moves away, your head and eyes should not move with it. Take the initiative, you are totally in charge. This section is difficult, at this time, there are differences between the phenomenal me and your true self. You can only exercise control over the phenomenal me. At this time it is important to just relax.

2. Whether you can see it or not, push the scenery in front of your eyes forward, then pull the spirit light back slowly. Be sure to find an appropriate distance. When moving the spirit light, the speed must be slow. Do not hurry, do not be too mindful but relax, looking carelessly, as if you were not looking. Also pay attention and relax your entire body, expand your eyebrows, do not use force. Pay attention to the eye socket area when moving the spirit light. When pushing away, the eye sockets softly enlarge; when retrieving it, they contract little by little.

3. Pay attention throughout the process that the distance between you and the spirit light is neither too close nor too far. Stabilize the distance, properly maintaining the right balance. Continuously push it out and pull it back. Do not hurry! Do not use force!

4. Throughout the process, pay attention and properly use "the openings, the sense openings—so subtle and so wondrous!"

5. Aim to coagulate the spirit light into the size of a grain of millet. As the *Neijing tu* (Diagram of Internal Passageways) says, "One grain of millet conceals a whole world." This refers to the spirit light.

6. Relax your shoulders, let them sink down. Put down your hands, too, letting them drop. The shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists and hands are all relaxed. Do not hold your hands up as you gather your intention in front of the eyes. Relax the entire body, only the spine is straight, do not use force on the cervical vertebra. If your legs are in pain, relax the hips then lift the stem *qi* as this can mitigate the pain. Do not let your intention drop but keep it in front of your eyes.

To breathe through the Heavenly Eye, examine yourself as you slowly breathe through the Heavenly Eye. Inhale, look inside; exhale, look outside, then look into the distance. Use the Heavenly Eye to breathe. Inhale, look inside and gaze at the upper space (in the head). Softly look up, seeing the Hundred Meeting and the Crown Gate. Exhale, push the breath out through the Heavenly Eye, moving it outside the body, then look outside. Inhale, focus in through the Heavenly Eye; turn your vision inward, see if there is light in the head, continuously inhaling slowly. Master Lü said, "Where the *qi* ends, the spirit light appears."

Exhale, release the Heavenly Eye and push the spirit light out from the head area to gaze outside your body. Look outward, slowly exhale, and push the spirit light outside of the body. Maybe you see black in the middle and white along the outer ring. Inhale softly, look inward and see what is inside

your head. Look in and up. Is there some faint light in your head? Slowly exhale, breathing softly through the Heavenly Eye, letting it all go. Look at the outside of your body, pushing the *qi* out from the head. Push it out through the Heavenly Eye, farther and farther into the distance. Strengthen your intention, enlarge the eye sockets, but keep the process gentle.

Inhale, let it move inside and gently focus on the pores of the head. Exhale, push the light in the head out from the Heavenly Eye, going beyond the body. Push farther, moving the spirit light into the far distance. Breathe longer, so it keeps pushing forward but be gentle: you might see blackness in front of your eyes. Inhale slowly, the more you inhale the brighter it is inside of your head. Inhale, slowly pull the spirit light from the distance, moving it slowly to the front of your eyes. At this time, there is still light in the head. Look for the spirit light and see whether it is in the inside of the head or outside.

With the help of breathing, slowly push the spirit light farther. Softly exhale a little, push the spirit light out. Then bring it back as you inhale, slowly pulling it back and slowly inhaling. When it arrives before your eyes, calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. Pay attention to the distance between the spirit light and the Heavenly Eye. Then relax again, keeping the physical form completely still and unmoving. As long as the body does not move, the *qi* is perfect and the intention is present.

When the eyes look toward the middle, the sun and moon unite. Find a good distance and relax your eyebrows. Then pay attention to the changes in front of your eyes and fix the scene if it appears. Push the spirit light in front of your eyes farther, then pull it back. Gather the scattered spirit light to the middle, making sure the breathing is soft, subtle, and long. Breathe slowly, softly, and faintly. Do not use force, inhale in and out continuously, do not pause between inhaling and exhaling. Put the intention back to the front of your eyes, now calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. Settle down at the Heavenly Eye and let eyes turn toward the middle. The spirit light may be scattered, so slowly gather it together. Relax the entire body, paying attention to the changes in front of your eyes. Gather the scattered the spirit light toward the middle.

To rotate the Heavenly Net, use the Heavenly Eye line to rotate the spirit light in front of your eyes, letting it spin. Strengthen your intention, keeping it in front of the eyes, use the conscious spirit to carry the primordial spirit. Now as the intention is in front of the eyes, rotate the spirit light at its place. After rotating it, the eyes look toward the middle, but keep the physical form completely still and unmoving. Strengthen your intention, keeping it in front of the eyes. If there is any scattered spirit light there, rotate it, too. Rotate even the spirit light you cannot see.

No matter if there is any the spirit light in front of your eyes, spin the Heavenly Eye line and the spirit light there. Watch the spirit light and rotate the line too. Do not rush into pushing it forward but rotate it wherever it is. Rotate it in front of your eyes and do not let it get away. The Heavenly Eye line is

spinning, and so is the Heavenly Eye. As they spin in their original place, let the spirit light rotate.

After the spirit light starts to rotate, push it away. You can feel there is something rotating in front of your eyes, notice the spirit light rotating right there. Push it into the distance while rotating. Along with the force of rotation, let it slowly move forward. Rotate it a little faster, but push it out a little more slowly. Push it to the distance while rotating, sending it far out. Send it farther and keep pushing, but do not lose touch with it.

After it reaches way out, reverse the direction of the spirit light's rotation. Steady the spinning direction, then revert it and slowly pull it. Now the rotation is in the opposite direction as before. Once it turns in this new direction, slowly pull it and make it come back. Pull it while rotating, slowly moving it in the front of the eyes. Then pull it farther until your forehead is bright. Pull it to the Heavenly Eye between the eyebrows.

Slowly pull it while rotating and receive it in the eye of the Heavenly Eye. From here, take it to the Point of Heaven or the Postnatal Mirror. Let it rotate in the inner space, slowly letting it come back. After it touches the Heaven point, again reverse the rotation and change it back to the original direction. After it goes back in the initial direction, slowly push the spirit light as it rotates. There is a force inside that can push it from the Heaven point to the Heavenly Eye. Keep pushing and from there project it outside the body.

While rotating and sending it into the distance, accelerate the rotation and push it farther out. After it reaches far into the distance, slow the rotation and reverse the direction, that is, go backward. Reverse the direction of rotation and slowly rotate it backward. Bring it back while rotating, moving it to the front of your eyes, then rotate it there. The eyes look toward the middle, the intention is in front of the eyes and all focus is to the middle.

Reverse the direction again, back to where it was originally. Rotate the spirit light in front of your eyes, keep on rotating it. Slightly accelerate the rotation. At this time, the head does not move and you let the spirit light turn from the center. Slowly rotate it toward the center, moving ever farther inward. Breathe through the Heavenly Eye and look at the distance between you and the spirit light. Coordinate the movement with your breathing, softly pushing it. Inhale, pull it in; exhale, push it out. Operate the spirit light in this way. Let it move in front of the eyes, then steady the distance between it and the Heavenly Eye to find a good position. At this point you can slowly stop the rotation of the spirit light.

The eyes incline to the middle, they look toward the middle. Strengthen your intention, keeping it in front of the eyes. At this time, it should be softly brilliant right there. Then pull the scattered spirit light together toward the middle. Do not move your head and keep your breathing soft, subtle, and long. Exhale, relax, and let your body sink down.

Slowly push the spirit light in front of your eyes farther out, then slowly pull it back. You must be able to push the spirit light. Pay attention to any changes in front of your eyes. Push the spirit light farther out as you enlarge the eye sockets. Then pull it back slowly as you shrink the eye sockets, contracting them to such a degree that there is a faint light in front of the eyes. Properly use the Heavenly Eye, as well as both your eyes. Let the three points become one. The ancients called this the "the sun and moon unite." Then find the right distance between the spirit light and the Heavenly Eye. Pull the scattered spirit light together toward the middle. Now, relax, keeping your breathing soft, subtle, and long.

Notes

1. When you rotate spirit in the Ancestral Orifice and lift the *qi* up, the leg pain you may experience is different from when you sit cross-legged while undertaking the basic practice. For now, endure the pain. Keep your intention in front of your eyes and do not relax.

2. If your hips do not relax, the body cannot sink down. If your body has already sunk down, be sure to keep the spine straight. Make sure to keep the physical form completely still and unmoving.

3. Be sure to stay connected with the spirit light during the rotation. Pay attention to the direction of rotation as it goes out and move into the opposite rotation coming back. When moving the spirit light, also pay careful attention to the breathing, making it soft, subtle, and long. Use your powers skillfully!

III. Focus Spirit in the Cavity of *Qi*, Cleanse the Civil and Martial

1. Drop the Curtain and Revert the Light

Spirit rests within stem *qi*. In ancient times, the spirit light was called the root ingredient, while the elixir scriptures spoke of it as the external ingredient. From here base matter can turn into gold. Now the intention is in front of the eyes. Gather the spirit light and shrink it to the size of a millet grain. Look at it without looking. After some time of observation, take a deep breath and slowly pull into the body. Bring it right in front of your eyes, then pass it through the Heavenly Eye into the Niwan Palace. Gently lower your head and tuck your chin. Let your eyes look down, lower them and look at the nose. The eyes observe the nose, the nost observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. From here, move the spirit light down the broken line, reaching from the upper field to the middle field and eventually to the lower field. Do not rush. Do not move it fast, lest your momentum breaks.

Turn your vision inward and slowly send the spirit light into the lower field. Slowly send it down inside the body. The eyes can summon spirit. They are where spirit enters the body. After intention and *qi* arrive in the lower field,

spirit will follow. Lead the spirit light into the lower field, keeping your physical form completely still and unmoving. At the same time, inhale and softly focus in the lower abdomen. These actions should be smooth, so that the external and internal ingredients can mix. The intention should be in the right place. Also, the eyes should send the spirit light to the right place. The speed of the intention and the spirit light should be consistent; the same also applies to the eyes and the spirit light. Then inhale, take it to the lower field, focus it down. Exhale, release the lower abdomen. The lower abdomen should have a subtle vibration. If the feeling does not come, do it again. Then, even if you do not gather ingredients, the intention should stay in the lower field.

Notes

1. Focus the spirit light and lower the head. Focus in the lower abdomen and lower the eyes to look at the nose. The eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. You perform this series of movements while breathing *qi* into the lower field. The movement must be smooth. The spirit light arrives at the lower field through the broken line via the actions of the eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. The "heart" here means the center, with all three points (eyes, nose, heart) in a straight line. In the elixir scriptures, this series of movements creates the elixir of immortality, helping you succeed. Therefore, you must do this properly. Slowly pull it, do not move fast. This process is also used to string together the three fields. If you practice this improperly, the upper, middle and lower fields cannot connect.

2. Following your intention as the eyes move, carrying spirit. Thus, slowly send the spirit light down, deliver it slowly with your eyes. Turn your vision inward and send it down, moving it down and pouring it into the lower field. Slowly send the spirit light into the lower field. Make sure the eyes, intention, and spirit all stay together as you move down along this path. Look to see if there is a route. Learn this path by heart.

3. After the spirit light reaches the lower abdomen, inhale and softly focus there. In order to focus the light, you need to inhale softly into the lower abdomen. Inhale very slowly, release the lower abdomen, and gently focus inside. The breath should long and the movement slow, it cannot be fast. Exhale, release the lower abdomen gently. To master the firing process properly, the movement of the lower abdomen cannot be too big.

4. After retrieving it back, the intention must not leave the lower field. Now spirit is within the stem *qi*. This is the process of merging the internal and external ingredients. Whether you can make the elixir of immortality, or can turn metal into gold, depends on this moment. So, make sure to put your intention in the lower field. Returning the light back into the body, you can capture the five thieves (of the senses).

2. Processing the Ingredients in the Kun Palace

The external ingredients now enter the furnace and cauldron. After the spirit light enters the lower field, guard it well. At this time, there is a subtle involuntary movement in your lower abdomen and the intention rests at the lower field. Let spirit, intention, and eyes converge in the lower field. After they arrive in the lower abdomen, slowly take a breath in and out. Next, after the intention reaches the lower field, inhale, softly focusing in your lower abdomen. Make sure to practice properly. Exhale, release. Inhale, softly focusing in the lower abdomen, and lift the front genitalia. Exhale, release the lower abdomen, keep releasing it slowly and feel it distend. Pay attention to the changes inside the lower abdomen, feel how it is slowly distending. Use the lower abdomen to drive the lower field.

Inhale, slowly and softly focus in the lower abdomen. Focusing inward, the lower abdomen is getting smaller and smaller. Continue focusing inside. Exhale, release and enlarge it. Breathe slowly. Inhale, slowly and lightly focus in the lower field. Exhale, slowly and softly release it outward. After doing this several times, inhale, softly focus in the lower field and lift the perineum. Exhale, release. Strengthen your intention, do not let it slip away and do not think about anything else. The intention must stay in the lower field. Inhale, turn your vision inward and look at the lower field. Keep the intention here. Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen, pulling in little by little, always focusing. Exhale, let the lower abdomen and lower field expand outward little by little. Let the lower field grow and the lower abdomen swell.

The intention guards the lower field while you continue practicing internal breathing. Inhale, the *qi* moves down below the naval; exhale, it rises up but not beyond the heart area. Release the lower abdomen slowly, let it move softly. Steady the breathing to make it perfectly smooth. The breathing must be soft, even, and long. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen and feel it getting warm; exhale, release. Inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, release. Inhale, use some force in the lower abdomen; exhale, release and relax the entire body. Inhale, use some force to focus in the lower field; exhale, release. At this time, the lower abdomen should feel soft and warm while gently moving. Rotate the lower abdomen back and forth, left and right, see if the lower field can or cannot warm up.

Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen, letting it warm up. If you are doing it right, the lower field will be warm. Exhale, slowly release. Inhale, focus in the lower field with some force. Exhale, slowly release. Focus in the lower abdomen little by little, keeping it continuous. Exhale, slowly release, again keeping it continuous. Inhale, focus continuously in the lower field until it reaches all the way to the end. At the same time, lift hip bones and perineum. Inhale, lift it all, lift yourself. Now hold your breath. As you do not breathe, tighten the body, make it tighter and tighter.

Exhale, relax the body, let it sink down in one continuous move. Do this several times. Then inhale softly, focus in the lower abdomen. Exhale, release. After you do this for a while, the lower field begins to move with the breathing, and the breathing moves with the lower field. Turn your vision inward toward the lower field to see if there is a space and if there is any substance within it. Then see if the lower field can move, paying attention to its direction. Let the lower field move with your natural breathing. Let natural breathing push the movement of the lower field, getting it to move. Briefly hold the breath and push the lower field with internal stem *qi*; see if it moves. Quite likely, the lower field moves fast. If so, speed up your breathing. Keep paying attention to the movements of the lower field. Turn your vision inward and look at it. Spirit light, spirit, and stem *qi,* should be there with the intention: they all enter into the lower field.

As your intention is in the lower field, so are spirit and spirit light. At this time, relax. Then steady the breathing, making it soft, even, and long. Inhale, softly focus in the lower abdomen and let the lower field softly contract. Exhale, softly release the lower field and let the lower abdomen release. Breathe like this a few times, moving very slowly. Then stabilize the breath, slowly return to natural breathing as you settle the lower field. After you feel the lower abdomen move, gradually add pore breathing, so the pores start to move. Inhale, gently focus the body, pulling the pores keeping inward. Exhale, release the entire body. The pores and lower abdomen are all moving softly. Inhale, gently focus the body and the lower abdomen at the same time. Exhale, release. Slow the breathing and turn your vision inward to look the lower field. Notice any changes that occur inside. The lower abdomen is softly moving; it should also be bright.

Notes

1. At this time the ingredients are in the furnace and cauldron. Internal and external ingredients merge and form the elixir. The ancients called this turning base metals into gold. Keep it well guarded: the intention must stay in the lower field as you let the lower abdomen move.

2. Practice pore and internal breathing together, feeling the pores and lower abdomen softly moving at the same time. Steady the breath, making it soft, even, and long.

3. Pay attention when the pores are softly moving and see if they are breathing. That is, observe if the pores can breathe by themselves.

3. Steadying the Breath and Cleansing

Steady the breathing to make it soft, even, and long. It must not be fast. Think of it like a hen hatching an egg or a dragon nurturing it's pearl. During this phase, the pearl is still very small. Inhale, softly focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release and let the lower abdomen move. Keep the intention there. In-

hale, gently focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, slowly release. Do this a few times, then ease the movement of the lower abdomen and return to natural breathing. The intention is now in the lower field and you can proceed to practice cleansing.

Notes

1. Make sure to steady your breath properly. Breathing must be slow and the lower abdomen must move.

2. The movement of the lower abdomen must not be too large; the intention must not leave the lower field.

3. Depending on your situation, you can practice cleansing a bit longer.

4. Concentrate the Light into a Millet Bead

Conclude your cleansing and lift your head. With your eyes closed, look straight forward, the farther the better. Now project the intention from your body, letting it reach far out. See if there is light in the distance, see if your intention emits light. If you cannot see anything, use your imagination. Project the intention, the farther the better. To calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, gradually pull the spirit light back from the distance and slowly focus it before your eyes. Let your eyes look toward the middle, merge the eyes and the Heavenly Eye, and find a good position. To rotate the sun and moon, even if you cannot see the light, begin by slowly rotating your eyes. After you see the light, slowly pull the spirit light back to Heavenly Eye line. Relax the entire body, slowly push the spirit light farther, push the scene before the eyes outward, then slowly pull it back to the eyes. Pull it to a position where the eyes come together. Pull it back, slowly push it out, then slowly pull it back again. If the spirit light begins to rotate, add some force, thus cleverly prodding it to move. If the spirit light moves too fast, push it forward, then pull it back.

Notes

1. When you raise you head and look into the distance, move your intention very fast and make sure to maintain full attention. Project the intention out, the farther the better. If you cannot see anything, use your imagination. Intend it to go our very far. If you cannot do this, imagine a scene about your home. Project the intention, letting it reach as far as possible.

2. When calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, you must find the proper position. After seeing the light, slowly pull the spirit light to the Heavenly Eye line.

3. Do not apply force in this process. Let you eyebrows widen, keep the physical form completely still and unmoving, relax, and do not let your head follow the spirit light. If you apply force, the light will scatter, so do not push the spirit light around.

4. After the spirit light rotates, you might see some images. Remember them clearly.

IV. Turn Your Vision Inward, Find Internal Illumination, Circulate and Transform the Five Phases

1. Spirit Commands the Small Pearl

To turn metal into gold, start by gathering the spirit light into the size of a small pearl, slowly pulling it back inside the body. Inhale, lower your eyes and look at your nose. The eyes observe the nose, the nost observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. At the same time, focus in the lower abdomen, sending the spirit light down the broken line to the lower field. Exhale, release. In the elixir scriptures and the arts of external alchemy, this is called turning metal into gold. If you did not sense the spirit light descend, try bringing it down again.

To warm the furnace, let the lower abdomen move and slow down your breathing. The lower abdomen moves along with the breathing. Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. The lower abdomen keeps moving: this is the phase of warming up the furnace. You must get the furnace warm and tightly control the firing process. For this, the movement of the lower abdomen should not be too big.

Warm the furnace well. Feel the warmth and keep control of the firing process. After merging yin and yang *qi,* bring in the first bit of an external ingredient. Do this several times, then see whether the lower abdomen is getting warmer. When it barely moves, rotate it back and forth in a circular motion, left and right. See if you can get the lower field to warm up.

If you feel the lower abdomen is getting warmer while softly moving, add slow pore breathing. Inhale, focus the body, letting all the pores slowly contract. Let the pores squeeze inward. Exhale, release. At this time, the lower abdomen is barely moving while the pores move very softly. See if the pores can breathe while moving. Do this a few times, then slowly reduce the movement of the lower abdomen. At the same time, return to natural breathing. Slow down the breathing and turn your vision inward toward the lower abdomen which should be bright. The intention stays in the lower field.

Notes

1. Make sure you properly take the spirit light to the lower field. Pay close attention to how the parts combine and merge. Pull it back slowly, never moving fast. If you feel the spirit light does not descend, pull it back again. Be sure to pull it back slowly, do not be too fast.

2. The lower abdomen must barely move. Breathe slowly, not fast. To control the firing process, the movement of the lower abdomen must not be too big.

3. After yin *qi,* yang *qi,* and the five phases merge, add the next external ingredient to concoct the elixir. Actually, this ingredient is the spirit light. Only if you practice it right will the internal and external ingredients merge completely.

4. Pay attention to what you experience. See if there is breathing when the pores are barely moving. That is, observe if the pores can breathe.

5. Pay attention to the meaning of "command" in the phrase, "spirit commands the small pearl." This means that spirit goes first and the stem *qi* follows.

2. Circulate and Transform the Five Phases

Keep your intention in the lower field. Practice sitting meditation for a while, then strengthen the intention, using some force with your intention to move the lower abdomen. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen and lift the stem *qi* with the spirit light from the lower field into the bladder. After it reaches there, exhale and relax. Now the intention is in the bladder. Inhale, focus in the bladder; exhale, release. Do this a few times, then take a deep breath, move the spirit light *qi* to the liver. After it reaches there, exhale and relax.

Inhale, focus in the liver; exhale, let release. After circulating the *qi* and transforming the liver, take a deep breath and lift the stem *qi* with the spirit light to the heart. After it reaches there, exhale and relax. Inhale, focus in the heart; exhale, release. After circulating the *qi* and transforming the heart, inhale, focus again in the heart; exhale, push the stem *qi* with the spirit light into the stomach, allowing it to expand. Exhale and relax. Inhale, focus in the stomach and spleen; exhale, release, letting them move. From here, take a deep breath and move the stem *qi* with the spirit light up to the lungs.

Inhale, let it reach the lungs; exhale, relax. Inhale, focus in the lungs and both sides of the chest; exhale, release. After circulating the *qi* and transforming the lungs, inhale, focus again in the lungs; exhale, push the stem *qi* with the spirit light into the kidneys. After it reaches there, relax. Inhale, focus in the kidneys; exhale, release. After circulating the *qi* and transforming the kidneys, inhale, focus in the kidneys; exhale, push the stem *qi* with the spirit light into the bladder, allowing it to distend. Release the front genital area. Inhale, focus in the bladder, gently lifting the front genital area; exhale, release.

After circulating the *qi* and transforming the bladder, take a deep breath and lead the stem *qi* with the spirit light back to the liver. After it reaches there, relax. Repeat the cycle a second time, silently circulating the five phases until you come back to the bladder.

Notes

In essence, this silent circulation of the five phases is different from the one described earlier. Before, stem *qi* went first and the spirit light followed: thus you put ingredients into your furnace. Here, however, spirit goes first and stem *qi* follows. Pay attention to the word "command," which indicates the process of refining the ingredients and concocting the elixir.

3. Merge Spirit and Life Force into Oneness

To establish minor elixir circulation, inhale, lift the stem *qi* with the spirit light up to the lower field and use some force to focus in the lower abdomen. Let the stem *qi* of the five phases enter the lower field. Exhale, release the lower abdomen, which is quite powerful. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. Inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, release. Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen and also the lower field; exhale, slowly release. After doing this several times, slowly lessen your breathing. At the same time, reduce the force of the lower abdomen. After the breathing is very soft, focus in the lower abdomen and release it gently while returning to natural breathing. This is the first refinement: you have established minor elixir circulation.

To disperse the fire through breathing, begin by breathing naturally. If you are doing it right, you can feel a warmth in your lower abdomen as you breathe. Keep your intention in the lower field and turn your vision inward toward it. The lower field may still be moving. This is an internal movement, different from embryo respiration. Use your internal stem *qi* to instigate the movement, then slowly settle the lower field. Now the intention is in the area of the lower field in the lower abdomen. Wait for it to start moving, slowly separate your hands and place them on your knees. Start to disperse the fire through breathing. Inhale, let the *qi* from all four sides and eight directions squeeze the pores as you focus the entire body, including the legs; exhale, release the *qi* through the pores into all four sides and eight directions. Slowly release it, letting it all out. Inhale, focus body. Now spirit is inside the body, which gets smaller and smaller as you pull it inside. Exhale, let all the pores open and the body expand: release it all out.

Inhale, focus the pores inward as well as all the inner spaces; exhale, slowly release. Inhale, let the *qi* from the pores enter the lower field as you focus the lower abdomen; exhale, release. As you exhale, let the *qi* in the lower field radiate through all the pores of the body. As you release, let the entire body expand outward getting bigger.

Inhale, let the *qi* from the pores flow into the lower field; focus in the lower abdomen and squeeze it, pushing it into the lower field. Exhale, let the *qi* from the lower field radiate through the pores. Release the lower abdomen and all the pores, letting go of the entire body. Inhale, focus the entire body and make it smaller. Exhale, release and let it get larger, the bigger the better. Release it out, expanding it to be huge and vast. Now let the entire body relax and

slowly return to natural breathing. At this time, if you are doing it right, the entire body will warm up. Your proof of practice is that the body is very warm. Your intention is twofold: both in the lower abdomen and in all the pores. You are breathing naturally.

Slowly steady the breath, making it smooth and even. Keep the physical form completely still and unmoving and sit in meditation for a longer time. Relax the entire body, but keep it completely still and unmoving. Steady your breathing to be soft, subtle, and long. While breathing out, relax the entire body, sink down the entire body, let it the sink down entirely. Keep the physical form completely still and unmoving, do not move your shoulders, arms, hands, wrists, fingers, spine, or head. Relax, breathe evenly and relax again. The hands do not exert any force as you pay close attention to the changes inside. Quite possible you may enter a state where empty space gives birth to brightness. Just keep breathing smoothly.

At this time, turn your vision inward toward your body universe. The intention is in the lower field, pay attention to the changes inside. See the changes inside the body universe. Relax, you must relax the entire body, making sure not to move at all. Turn your vision inward and see what is inside the head. Look inside again, then steady the breath, making it soft, subtle, and long. Relax again, inhale and out evenly. Look inside again, then relax, pay attention to the changes inside. Relax, look inside and breathe evenly. Relax, let it settle down, steady the breathing, make it soft, even, and long. Breathe evenly again, smoothly in and out.

Seal the furnace, disperse the fire, then warm up the furnace. Now the intention is in the lower field, slowly weaken the breathing and return to natural breathing. When the intention is in the lower field, see if minor elixir circulation has been successfully established. This time, the intention must not leave the lower field. Merge yin and yang *qi,* then add the five phases and put them all into the furnace. Observe any changes, reflecting and perceiving to see if anything happens.

Notes

1. This is the process of merging the two *qi* of yin and yang, then adding the five phases and putting them all into the furnace. This is one way to cook the ingredients and concoct the elixir of immortality. It is called the small returned elixir.

2. The whole procedure consists of the process of sealing the furnace, dispersing the fire, and warming up the furnace. It also embodies the immortality practice on the human level, which is "use the body as a furnace, *qi* as the main ingredient, the heart-and-mind as fire, and the kidneys as water." You must become very good at controlling the firing process and properly use the power of the lower abdomen, matching it with your breath.

3. Keeping your intention in the lower field, carefully note any changes that happen there.

4. Nurturing the Dragon Pearl

Again relāx the entire body, releasing the shoulders, arms, wrists, hands, and fingers while keeping your spine straight. Keep your lips gently closed, teeth lightly touching, the tongue pushed against the upper palate, and the chin tucked. Once again steady the pore breathing in order to start the process. Inhale, focus in the body; exhale, release. Do this several times, keeping the body completely still and unmoving while the pores move gently. Speed up your breathing, at the same time slowly weaken the range of motion of the pores and see if they can breathe. Slowly return to natural breathing. Keep your intention at the pores, do not move but pay close attention to any changes happening in the body.

Notes

1. Make sure the body is relaxed.
2. Increase the speed of breathing and practice pore breathing. The ancients called this practicing like "a hen hatching an egg or a dragon nurturing its pearl." This is because the pearl is still in its infancy and you need to do your utmost to nurture it.
3. When practicing on your own, this step may take longer.

5. Inner Observation

If you have extra time, you can practice inner observation, looking closely at your upper, middle, and lower spaces. After this, bring your intention back to the lower field.

6. Penetrating Practice

With the intention in the lower field, place your hands gently on your knees. Do not use chest breathing but breathe from the lower abdomen. If you breathe from the chest, your legs may hurt. There is a path for leg pain to travel. To find that, first see where it is: in the bones, muscles, skin, or bone marrow. Find out which part exactly has the pain. To change the way it hurts, try sending it through the bone marrow, letting it find its own internal pathway.

Relax, keep the physical form completely still and unmoving, and breathe smoothly. With the intention still in the lower field, turn your vision inward to look at it. If your spirit is not in the lower field, find out where it is and, remember where it went. Pay attention to any changes inside as you turn your vision inward. Make sure any leg pain does not cause your intention to leave the lower field.

Penetrating practice works with its own path. Inhale up from your feet to the lower field, then exhale from the lower field to your feet. Keep your physical form completely still and unmoving, and return to natural breathing. Let intention stay in the lower field and use the lower abdomen to gently move the lower field. Inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, release. Inhale, softly focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release.

After breathing like this several times, inhale, focus in the lower field; exhale, push the *qi* of the lower field into your legs, move it down to your knees, calves, and feet. All this while, keep breathing out. Inhale, pull the *qi* from the feet, let it slowly move through calves, knees, and thighs until it gets to the hip bones. From here, let the *qi* reach the lower abdomen and pull it into the lower field. Lift the perineum and hip bones. Keep inhaling and focus in your lower abdomen, lifting the hip bones, even the entire body.

Exhale slowly, gently move the *qi* down from the lower field all along the legs, passing through the hips, thighs, knees, calves, all the way to the feet. Relax and let your body sink down. If there is more breath, exhale completely.

Now slowly inhale, pull the *qi* in and up from the feet slowly to calves, knees, and thighs. On the one hand, you are inhaling; on the other hand, the hip bones are lifting. Feel the body rising, lifting it all up. Feel as if the Crown Gate is being pulled up as you lift the perineum and front genital area and contract and lift the anus. The entire body is rising up, the *qi* is going into the lower field. Slowly let it enter. Exhale, the *qi* in the lower field goes out. Exhale from the lower field slowly, little by little. The perineum must feel hot. As slowly as possible, moving down, release it little by little, let it reach the feet and go out from there. Let your body sink down as you exhale.

Inhale, pull it from the feet to the lower field, letting the entire body rise up, lifting it all. Let the entire body rise up as if you were standing. Lift the hip bones, tighten the perineum and front genital area, and let the stem *qi* enter into the lower field as the entire body rises. Exhale, release it from the lower field, letting it out slowly. As you relax the entire body, it begins to sink. Release it into the legs and feet, then let it go out of the body.

Inhale, lift your sitting bones slowly, raising the entire body and lifting the three yin openings. Inhale, let the body feel very heavy, extremely heavy, like a thousand pounds. Keep it sinking, slowly let it sink all the way to the bottom, then relax. Once sunk to the bottom, you cannot push it, but it will start to move. Once it moves, slowly pull it back to the lower field, then breathe evenly. Slowly return to natural breathing, then pay attention to any changes inside. Where the intention moves, spirit follows; where spirit goes, stem *qi* will follow. Your pain now has a path.

Finally, let the stem *qi* return to lower field. Relax the entire body, but keep the physical form still and unmoving. With the intention in the lower field, turn your vision inward and look at it. After it reaches the lower field, inhale

and slowly focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release the lower abdomen. Practice breathing through the lower abdomen a few times.

7. Relaxation

Relax the entire body, keeping your intention in the lower abdomen and lower field. Turn your vision inward and look at the lower field, noting any changes there. Steady your breathing to be soft, even, and long, going in and out smoothly. Relax your entire body, but keep the physical form completely still and unmoving. Even if there is pain in your legs, just relax again.

Let the lower field stabilize; let all your fields, upper, middle, and lower, stabilize. Turn toward your heart and let the body settle down. Breathe naturally. Never mind the breathing: your nose can breathe on its own, so relax. Slowly make the breathing soft, even, and long. Inhale, let the body gently tighten. Exhale, relax and let the body sink down, then relax again. Spread the *qi* and relax the body, then let it sink once more. Let the body sink down and the *qi* from the legs spread all over. Then the legs will not feel pain.

Turn your vision inward and observe any changes in your body universe. Let your ears listen to the sound of your body universe. Steady your breathing, making it soft, subtle, and long. Keep your body completely still and unmoving, look inward, and breathe evenly. Breathing should be soft, even, and long. Exhale, let the entire body sink down as your eyes look inside. Turn your vision inward and use the body universe to sense the greater universe outside, then relax. After a period of sitting meditation, you can rub your hands and face. This concludes the practice.

Chapter Fourteen B

Explanation of the Cultivation Methods

A priority in cultivation is protection against danger. Calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice is a mandatory practice that connects the different steps and techniques. It forms part of the forty-five steps of the *Lingbao bifa* and also plays a role in women's alchemy. A method of connection, it links one step to the next; a special practice, it also protects from danger. That is, if there is a break and you cannot continue or if you get stuck and cannot finish, use it as a bridge. When sitting in meditation, prevention of danger forms a top priority. If you cannot finish the practice, have a headache, feel as if there is a hoop on your head, or have pain in your stomach, calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, then slowly conclude your practice. This removes danger and discomfort.

Especially in women's alchemy, if you practice for half an hour and spirit is not coming back or does not follow your command, immediately lift it, release it, and calm it at the Ancestral Orifice. Then take it back to the lower field and restart your practice. If you cannot complete the practice during the assigned period or if you shift without control, clutch your hands while calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. Wait until the issue has passed, then come back to the practice. It is unlikely that you will encounter further problems. For this reason the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* is the emperor of all the elixir scriptures.

Throughout the cultivation process, take off glasses, watches, and jewelry (all accessories). Also loosen your clothes, because any tightness affects the flow or distribution of *qi*. When sitting with both legs crossed, find a comfortable posture. You can sit naturally crossed-legged, in half lotus, or in full lotus: there are no special requirements. When you sit still continuously in any of these postures, you will be clear-headed and know spirit in its greatness. Never use force to adjust yourself, just sit continuously. Although this may be hard, let all past affairs and thoughts just pass on through your mind. Also, whenever you sit cross-legged, make sure to start by repenting, then work on the various methods of attracting immortality to steady your body and self.

The methods of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* present the process to concoct an internal elixir but describe it in terms of refining the external elixir. For that, first find a flat place and even the ground with a shovel. Create a stable foundation for your furnace by making sure the ground is level. Then set up the furnace, which means placing it in the right place, and so on. The same holds true

for internal practice. Both processes closely connect, which means both the practice is continuous and interrelated with no pause. The names of the various methods are artificially added. They are easy to remember, and also reflect the principles and methods of cultivation.

The crucial point of the whole process is to make sure the intention follows along closely. It needs to move along with the practice process, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, often releasing fast and pulling in slowly. Both the intention when breathing and the movement of the lower abdomen should be gradually strengthened and expanded, then engage in a process of slowly weakening. Make sure to control the intensity properly. At the same time, your breathing must coordinate with your intention, using the three methods of natural, pore, and internal breathing.

Start by sitting cross-legged and steady your breathing, making it soft, even, and long. As you get comfortable, let mind and body settle down. At this time, you have not yet started to focus spirit, but concentrate on first settling down. Only after your breathing is properly steady can body and mind settle down. If you cannot steady the breathing properly, you cannot settle down. Because sitting cross-legged requires you to remain unmoving, the only way to steady yourself is through breathing: there are no other ways.

The only way to become comfortable is to use deep breathing, which causes your mind and body to stabilize. You can use this method also in life. If there is anything that distresses you, take a deep breath and allow yourself to become comfortable. Be sure to let your body sink down while breathing. It is better to let your entire body sink down, because standing still is not steady. Keep sinking it down all the way to the bottom, which is not easy. After mind and body are settled, begin to adjust your shoulders and spine, then steady the breath until the *qi* arrives in the center of your body.

Not only the inner organs but the entire body sinks down. Slightly tighten your body while breathing in, do not let it expand. Let the entire body drop so only the skeleton is left, everything else has fallen down. Keep removing it. After it has sunk down, the five organs can break free from each other, and a crack will appear. If it is too tight, there will be no crack. In hard qigong, people tighten up: they lift the five organs, tighten, and strike. But for this practice, you need to relax, and relax completely.

Qi is all around, everyone is surrounded by it. Q*i* is inside the body, too, thus it is said, "people have *qi* and *qi* is inside people." Find a way to combine the two spaces into one. If the body moves, the *qi* space moves, too. Let the body move along with the space as if the entire space is moving. After breathing through the pores, the space can come inside. The key is spirit: you need to find out if it is outside or inside. If spirit is inside, focus the body. If it is in the space outside, focus it little by little, pulling it back from the space and guiding it into your body. Then look at yourself.

The guided instructions for this practice tend to be short and compact; however, they cover many movements. When you begin breathing, make sure you and the space move together. Everything is continuously moving. When the pores settle down, they do not move; when the lower field settles down, the inner space does not move. The guided instructions start out by telling you to sit cross-legged and steady your breathing. At this time, focus spirit and pull it back, so the body and mind become stable (settle down body and mind). Steady your breathing. Pay attention and make it soft, even, and long. Breathe through the nose, the slower the better. Nostril breathing can follow three different paths, but you need to find a way for it to connect with the lower abdomen. Inhale through the nose to drive the lower abdomen: softly inhale and slowly steady it on your own.

Inhale, slowly focus in the lower abdomen, make sure to focus it little by little. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen and push it gently along with the breathing. Exhale, release it little by little. This movement can cause spirit to return to the body. First do not think about what or where spirit is, just intend for it to return to the body. There is only one path to bring it back, that is, by inhaling and focusing in the lower abdomen. So, focus softly inward. The guided instructions cannot explain everything in great detail, so they only say, "adjust the breath on your own, stabilize body and mind." In fact, the method is to inhale and focus in the lower abdomen.

Look inside, so the intention can lead the conscious spirit. Move your intention: wherever it goes, spirit goes, too, and the *qi* follows.

After sitting meditation is finished, think of your head as heaven and your abdomen as earth to adjust your breathing. The center line of the head is the nose, thus we speak of the nose standard. The purpose of inhaling and exhaling through the nose is to find the center line of the head. After finding the center line, move the intention from the head to the lower abdomen, using internal breathing in order to arrange the body. Breathing in and out through the nose is called ordinary respiration. Make sure to slow down its frequency. After you feel your breathing has become smooth, use ordinary respiration to lead to perfect respiration. Move the intention down from the nose to the lower abdomen and lower field. During this process, the intention becomes more intense, the force of the movement in the lower abdomen gradually increases. Afterwards, the force slowly weakens, but this process must not be too fast.

When setting up the furnace and installing the cauldron, there is a third pathway that draws the breath into the internal organs. Breathing again should be soft, even, and long, smoothly moving in and out. The lungs definitely need to move. However, only if the breath is deep enough will you get the bottom of the lungs to move. If you breathe normally, the bottom of the lungs rarely move. Only if the breathing is soft, deep, and long, the bottom of the lungs can move, that is why you must make your breathing soft, even, and long. Adjust the breath for a long time, until the five phases of the inner space all return to

their place, and the internal organs feel very comfortable. Before meditation (and after eating), the inner space may feel stuffed. In this case, sit still for some time. The *qi* will slowly rise up and drop down, and the inner space will gradually get comfortable.

In ancient times, you had to sink down while practicing nostril breathing. In this way, the uncomfortable places and organs slowly would disappear or become empty. In addition, while sitting still and adjusting the breath through the nose, some areas may feel painful. It is important to sit still until these painful spots disappear. Once they are gone, see if the space is now empty. Any breath that goes down, lift up to the head immediately. Take the breath into the head and adjust the pressure in this space. Let the cranial pressure slowly reduce or become balanced. Adjust the breathing of the pores of the head and see if the skull can move.

Adjust the pores until spirit no longer spreads outside. Then look at the movement of the pores of the head. If they are pressing well in, you may recall many things from memory. Because the head is being contracted, a lot of random things will come to your mind. Continue to squeeze the head pores until your inner eye cannot see outside, and your inner ear cannot hear outside: you no longer hear external sounds. Let your eyes look inside and slowly move the *qi* down to the lower abdomen and lower field, then adjust the pressure there.

Adjusting the abdominal space must be slow, it should go together with focusing in the lower abdomen. You must control the intensity, combining the focusing of anus and the front genital area with that of the lower abdomen. There is no way to explain all these actions at once as we give guided instructions. Adjust the lower field until you feel a space emerge. Once adjusted properly, the upper and lower halfmoon spheres of the body will connect. *Qi* flows like the Taiji, like yin and yang: the upper half is clear while the lower half is turbid. You will feel at this point that your bottom is very heavy or hot. You may also feel that the top, the head, feels refreshed. At this time, begin to seal yourself and practice pore breathing.

In Daoist internal alchemy there are three spaces: upper, middle, and lower. Breathing through the pores provides a reference point. The reference point you are learning right now is the lower field. Do not look at the reference point of the upper or middle fields, but keep your intention in the lower field. In the next step, the practice moves from the lower to the middle field. During this time, adjust the upper and lower halfmoon spheres (between them is the *qi* of yin and yang), let the *qi* of yin and yang enter the lower field, at which point this step reaches its conclusion. Wait quietly for any movement to occur in the lower field: heat, beating, or something else. Control it, then conclude the practice.

If you have time left, push the stem *qi* of the lower field into the bladder, silently circulate the five phases, and return the stem *qi* to the lower field at the end. This can also count as a step before you conclude the practice. After silently circulating the five phases, let the stem *qi* return to the lower field. You

may now experience certain phenomena, such as the opening of the pathway of the heavenly circuit. Sometimes it goes down and rises up the back. This is the heavenly circuit of the Conception and Governing Vessels, but it does not augment yang fire or reduce yin impact. Inhale, rotate your eyes and let the heavenly and body energies combine; often the body will begin to shake and vibrate. The vibration will move up and it is unlikely that you can bring it down. You just have to wait until the movement passes and the phenomenon slowly disappears. Do not try to control the *qi* when it travels through the circuit but keep it natural. After it stops vibrating or moving, return it to the lower field and nourish it. This is one step; from here, conclude the practice.

If you have more time, after the stem *qi* of the five phases returns to the lower field, form the Eight Trigrams *Ziwu* hand gesture and calm spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. The practice is all about body and cosmic energies. The passageway used to receive cosmic energy is called the Heavenly Eye: it is the opening from the body universe to the universe outside. If the cosmic energy is greater than the body energy, people will be in a trance or feel drowsy. At this time, pull the energy into the lower field and nourish it. It may be difficult to pull it back to the lower field.

After retrieving it back, silently circulate the five phases, this is another step. Slowly increase the force used in the lower field. In other words, when you slowly focus in the lower abdomen, focus just a little. Inhale, combine it with slow breathing and gradually make it longer. Do this for some time, then lift the anus and focus in the front genital area, from here move forcefully to the lower abdomen. During this time, you can use a towel to seal the three yin areas, which may feel a bit uncomfortable. The practice will naturally seal them, which means you can dispense with the towel.

Drawing the inner nature line is the first step you practice in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. It is called forcefully opening the Heavenly Eye. This point is the same one as the one when calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

When using the external to guide the internal, for example, when you are circulating the five phases, if you feel your fingertips going numb, it means you are moving too fast. Slow down the movement of the hands and breathing at the same time. The time you spend circulating the *qi* in each organ cannot be too long or too short. The benchmark is to feel if the stem *qi* is well distributed. The moment you feel that the mother loves her son, you can control the heat with ease. Otherwise (if you don't), the ingredients gathered will be either too tough or too tender and therefore will not turn into the elixir.

Classical Daoist texts note that, in order to concoct the elixir, you need at least seven types of ingredients. First, collect the stem *qi* of the five phases (i.e., five ingredients) and return it to the lower field. Then add your own natural yin and yang stem *qi* into the lower elixir field, which makes seven ingredients. Finally add the prime ingredient, the spirit light, raising the total to eight. The Scripture says, "Spirit entering the whole body forms the embryo, *qi* entering

the navel forms the breath." Yin embraces yang, spirit enters stem *qi,* and so on, all these expressions refer to the same thing. The purpose of silently circulating the five phases after building the foundation is to gather the energy into the lower field. Gathering the stem *qi* there concludes the practices of attracting immortality.

Silently circulating the five phases is also called minor elixir circulation, it is a fundamental practice. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* describes two brains that control us. The Daoist system works with three layers of being, including two brains, one in the head, the other in the abdomen. Another purpose of silently circulating the five phases is to find the heavenly heart (earth) in the abdomen, since by controlling this heart you have gained control over the cycle of movement through the inner organs. They move according to the laws of nature, a notion that matches the idea of heaven and humanity uniting in oneness. The energy when silently circulating the five phases is generated in the lower field.

The energy of the heavenly heart comes from the lower field and forms the birthplace of all energy in the body. In Chinese medicine, it is called the embryo, also known as the lower field. So when you move the lower abdomen (lower field), plow it with the strength of an ox. The goal is to gather the energy in the lower field. After you complete your silent circulation of the five phases, let their stem *qi* return (aggregate) in the lower field. Several feelings prove that you are successful:

1. The lower abdomen is hot or softly warm.
2. There is a subtle movement in the lower field.
3. After the stem *qi* gathers in the lower field, it may twitch, especially in children and young people. If it twitches, relax the body and keep the intention away from the lower field, lest the twitching gets worse. When it reaches a climax, you will be unable to move, which feels terrible. You might even fall. If this happens, open your legs, and it will be all right.
4. After the stem *qi* gathers in the lower field, something will start to move there. This movement has several directions. The two main directions are up and down, which brings you to the next stage of practice. At this level, however, press it down (downward) or lift it up (upward) to the lower field. Plow it with the strength of an ox and hold the *qi* in the lower field. It must be firmly in place there.

Only when the stem *qi* gathers in the lower field and there is some warmth, can it rise up. When you lift your head, you are actually lifting the stem *qi.* So, lift your head, keeping your eyes closed and looking into the distance, the farther the better. Let your hands form the Eight Trigrams *Ziwu* gesture. Daoists believe that it can ward off evil and outside disturbances of your *qi.* Be sincere and have no doubt. But make sure to get the hand form correct; otherwise the light may not converge. Adjust yourself properly, relax the entire body, and pour internal stem *qi* into the lower field. Keep it there and nourish it. "Nourishing" here means softly inhaling and exhaling. In fact, just nourish it

for a short period. Let the lower field move as if there is a space. Regardless of whether there is any substance inside, there is space and that is enough.

Then form your hands in Eight Trigrams *Ziwu.* Concentrate your intention in the lower field and turn your vision inward toward it. Actually the eyes have already been looking down, and the conscious spirit and the primordial spirit are in the same space. Next, gently move your eyes and lift your head. Do not lean back, just raise it softly and look straight ahead with your eyes bright but closed. The goal here is to lift the stem *qi* from the bottom, then send it out with the eyes closed. This process also forms part of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi.*

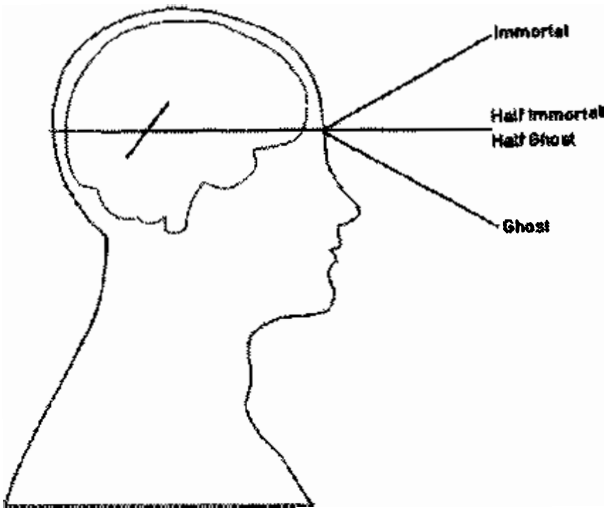
Spiritual Seeing

Lift the head, look straight ahead with your eyes closed. If you guide it slowly and gently, you easily fall asleep. But the speed must be slow. So, lift the *qi* from the bottom to the line—not the point—between the eyebrows. Lift it from the lower field to the upper field, then release it. There is a right angle here, so you first lift it, then change direction and look straight ahead. This is drawing two lines in the upper elixir field. After lifting it, look ahead with your eyes closed. You may not see anything in the beginning, but still keep your intention in the distance. Look into the distance with your eyes closed, the farther the better. If you cannot see anything, imagine it in the far distance.

There are several ways to look ahead: First, looking up is a method for entering the ordinary world, completely forbidden in Buddhism, since it comes with a strong desire for life and too many thoughts and causes the light to shake constantly. Next, looking down is a method for leaving from the ordinary world (always practiced in Buddhism). Here, you do not think about anything and remove all affairs from your heart, causing the light to be more stable. In Buddhism, this forms part of basic Samatha-Vipasyana. Look down, pull the light in and let it rise, then look down again. There is also a version of practicing this in reverse direction. The chin is not tucked. Third, looking straight forward is a method for being half immortal and half ghost (alive and dead), commonly used by Daoists.

Daoists believe that in cultivation there are always issues of leaving or entering the world, leaving or entering the Way. (Buddhists, too, speak of leaving or entering the world). If you look straight ahead, you may not see anything, but if you look down a little, you can see a light. Why can you see it when looking down, but cannot see it when looking straight ahead?

The ancients believed that looking down signals leaving the world (Buddhism) while looking straight ahead signals entering it (Daoism). Samatha-Vipasyana is a method of leaving the world; its basic practice requires the eyes to look down.



In Daoist meditation, you look straight ahead into the far distance, right at the world, which challenges you to understand the world on your own. Buddhist also understand the world, but their first step of practice is just the opposite of Daoist cultivation. Accordingly, the very last stage in Buddhism is to leave the world completely, while the highest level in Daoism is to return to it: they are completely opposite. Buddhists, to reach enlightenment and great illumination, practice with their eyes open.

Leaving the world makes refinement easy, entering it makes it that much harder. Because all people enter the world sooner or later, they all leave it in the end. Everyone is on the road to leaving the world as they are getting closer to death. Entering and leaving shift constantly. If you get used to leaving from the world, you may find it hard to enter it again. But if you are used to living in it, it is easy to leave.

Both Buddhist and the Daoist scriptures, when speaking of entering and leaving the world, they do not use the word "world," but write "Dao," as in "entering the Dao first, then leaving it." Because people range on different levels, Daoist practitioners can be said to "enter or leave the Dao." Ordinary people still leave or enter the world. For each level, the texts say something different. Since they are written by the masters to explain cultivation to their disciples, they speak of leaving and entering the Dao. Also, if the texts speak of entering the Dao, entering the world, or awakening to Dao, they are Daoist. If they use terms like leaving the world, leaving the Dao, or sudden enlightenment, they are Buddhist.

Slowly pull the spirit light back from the distance. Focusing the spirit light is the most difficult part. Best pull it in until the eyes move into one point: this is a Daoist secret. When both eyes move together, the shape resembles the shape of the butt and genitals (the opening of life and death). This is where the urinary and spermatic tracts intersect. Daoists believe that if the opening of life and death at the pelvic floor is not sealed, the light cannot gather. In order to identify the location of this opening, the eyes need to come together.

In addition, because a baby in the womb is cross-eyed, you must turn your eyes to the middle: this imitates the prenatal action as well as the genital area. Only when the eyes are crossed, will the spirit light appear. Pull it back slowly, not fast, lest it gets stuck between the eyebrows. If a large area of the face is stuck with the spirit light, it will stick very firmly. Also, if the area of light is too large, you cannot push it forward. Suppose you want to push a large item: it is

hard to move. It much is easier to push and move something small. At this time, push it forward with the help of breathing through the Heavenly Eye, then slowly pull it back and focus.

Don't be concerned whether you see it or not. Sometimes there is light in front of the eyes, sometimes it resembles the sun or moon, and sometimes it is tiny. At this time, pay attention to whether it is luminous or bright. In science, luminosity is the capacity of something to glow while brightness refers to the intensity of the light received by the human body. When looking at a light bulb nearby, it may look very bright: there is light but actually it is an emitting a form of light. Brightness will shift if you change from looking nearby to looking into the distance. It still emits light, but the luminosity has not changed.

Look at the spot, it may be a bit dark and not as bright as before, that is because it is too far away. Pull it in immediately, moving it back. If it looks very bright, emits light, and seems dazzling, your distance is too close. Push it away until it is bright but not glaring. Sometimes you may see a cloud of white or some sparkling highlights. This is because you are too close, so push it farther away. Maybe if you push it away, it will disappear. This indicates that the light is not gathered but scattered: find a way to keep it together.

Slowly pull the spirit light back from afar, moving it in front of your eyes, and calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. At this time, let the eyes turn toward the middle, actually look into the middle. In the beginning of practice, you may look for a while but cannot see any light. In that case, rotate the eyes, clockwise or counterclockwise. In either case, they rotate around the eye socket. Begin by slowly rotating clockwise, then reverse. While rotating, find out in which direction the spirit light is moving, then draw it to the Heavenly Eye line.

The ancients called the left eye the sun, and the right eye the moon. Daoist classics speak of rotating the sun and moon. During actual practice, it means rotating the eyes. In fact, the movements of the eyes are not synchronized and it is very difficult to get them to move together. Maybe you can rotate one eye with ease and have difficulty with the other; maybe the eyes will not rotate at all. Just keep trying. Rotate them and get them to align their movement: this is called the sun and moon unite. Concentrate the light there.

It might be difficult to find the appropriate distance when gathering the spirit light. Start by pushing it farther out, then pull it back. Make sure you are very still and quiet to let the spirit light calm down. When drawing the reflection and inner nature lines with the spirit light, you must be still so the spirit light can become quiet. Draw the inner nature line, which runs from the Heavenly Eye to the Eye and on to the Heaven point. Continue to pull it in and push it out: this is called forcefully opening the Heavenly Eye. Then draw the reflection line (which connects Hundred Meeting and Meeting Yin), lift the light quickly, very fast, then push it down equally as fast, then release it. When it starts to move, calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. This requires you to

find a place to stop its movement. So find the best point to stop and look at the spirit light.

Let the spirit light gather into an extremely small point and let it be very bright, the brighter the better. Gather it into a very bright point. If it is not bright enough, push it forward, then pull it back and focus it. When pushing it forward, softly enlarge your eye sockets a little. Do not enlarge them too much, as this might cause your eyes to open. Keep your eyes unmoving, just enlarge their circumference. When retrieving it, let the eye sockets become smaller. There is a problem of duration and degree here, which is not mentioned in the scriptures. Pull it back, then gather it in the middle: this is the best way.

After you see the spirit light, push it forward and slowly pull it back (while focusing). When pulling it back, find the right demarcation limit. Why can you not pull the light back after you see it? Why can you not see it to begin with? Why does the light disappear after you pull it back it? All these issues are explained in chapter 10, "The Light of Essence and of Discriminating Awareness," of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*:

> When you first practice, there is the light of inner nature; with churning thoughts it becomes discriminating awareness. As soon as discriminating awareness appears, the light vanishes and cannot be found. It is not that there is no light. It is just that the light has turned into discriminating awareness. The Yellow Emperor said: When sound moves, it does not produce sound but noise. This is the same idea.

For most people, the light comes back but you cannot see it. This is also because the light never stops moving. It looks like it is moving very slowly, but in fact it travels fast. Because it moves so fast, pause for a moment, then push forward, and the light will appear. Do not follow the point of the light when it slips away but hold on to your position as the one in charge. You are the sovereign ruler and you do not move. It will come back on its own after a while. If you go with it, it is hard to tell who the leader is and who the follower. This is explained in chapter 8, "Tactics for Being Carefree," of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, where there are clear cut instructions. It says, "Lower the curtain of your eyes, then act as if presenting an imperial edict to summon your ministers. Who would dare to not come?"

When rotating the sun and moon, you will discover a place that is bright. In that case, subtly pull it back to the Heavenly Eye point and line. From there, send it out into the distance, paying close attention to the movement of your eye sockets (they can move). Next, pull the light back, but do not overdo it, and send it to a good place. Push it forward again. If it is hard to move, that is because the internal force is not strong enough and the stem *qi* of the five phases is not sufficient. Pull it until it gathers at the Heavenly Eye line. At this time, if the light is unstable, it may bounce or it divide into several beams. Slowly gath-

er them all together. Once it is stable, do not move it, do not stop practicing, and do not move your body: just look at it.

Rotating the spirit light in front of the eyes is called rotating the handle of the Dipper. It is important to rotate the light around the Big Dipper line, so if you see the spirit light, start to rotate it in front of the eyes. Use the center of the Heavenly Eye to initiate the rotation. Once it starts to spin, slowly push it forward, moving it far away into the distance. Do not let it stop. If it stops, the spirit light is lost. Then slowly rotate it back, all the way to the Heavenly Eye and Heaven points, until it spins at the Postnatal Mirror. The moment it touches the Postnatal Mirror, you can reverse direction and push it out again. Rotate and push it forward, through the Heavenly Eye, the opening, and out of the body. Keep rotating it forward far, far away, then reverse it back in. When you return it, find a good place to settle it. Stop and allow it to rotate. Let it rotate at that place, moving it gently toward the center, then slowly stop the rotation.

Next, inhale through the Heavenly Eye as you push the spirit light forward. This is called being both inside and outside the body. Push the spirit light out and pull it back, moving it back and forth, but do not allow it to enter into the body. It is not inside the body but in front of the eyes, at the edge of your body universe. Push and pull the spirit light on the edge, then place it before your eyes and wait for something to change. As it opens and expands, you will see many beautiful scenes as well as various illusions, all of which is recorded in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. Other cultures call this the establishment of the mandala.

Regardless of what scenery you see and whether it is an illusion, the point is that you see it. At this point, respect yourself and have confidence. Each of you is his or her own body organism, clearly visible to yourself but maybe not to others, or vice versa. When describing what the organism sees as an illusion, you are really diminishing yourself. Just accept that you see something, whatever the scenery may be.

If you feel tired, take a deep breath and pull it back through the opening and into the upper, middle, and lower fields. Be sure to do this slowly. Inhale deeply and immediately breathe into the lower abdomen so you can hide it in the lower field. This is called the spirit light enters the Kun Palace. After it gets to the lower field, silently circulate the five phases or move it up and down.

While you focus the spirit light, inhale, lower your eyes and observe your nose. The eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. At the same time, softly focus in the lower abdomen and send it down. The eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. The heart here refers to the center, and all three points lie in a straight line. There are three types of looking: with eyes closed, eyes open, and lowered eyelids. First look with the eyes closed. At this time, do not move the head, inhale and pull the spirit light back to the Niwan Palace. Let your eyes look down, but do not lower your head, then send the light into the lower field along the broken line. Exhale, release the lower abdo-

men. When pulling it in, again move it along the broken line. This is in preparation for moving the three fields together.

If the head moves or you lower your head, the Twelve-storied Tower (throat) will close, and the spirit light will go down along the front (outside). It must go down inside the Twelve-storied Tower. If you cannot do this properly, you will have trouble moving the three fields together. If done properly, some people feel that the *qi* goes from the lower field to the middle field, sometimes it will rise up.

There are several paths for the spirit light to go down, as the eyes observe the nose and the nose observes the heart. The thing to worry about is that it travels along the surface. It should move inside from the upper to the middle, and then to the lower field. There is a question regarding whether *qi* or spirit should go first. The "intention" is between *qi* and spirit, therefore the right way is to inhale softly, let the *qi* move from the between the eyebrows into the upper field. After it reaches there, let the eyes look down and the intention guide the spirit. Here the intention is not the conscious spirit. The conscious spirit is in trance; it is not firm. Lead the *qi* with your intention and wrap the spirit with *qi*. After it reaches the lower field, after the external ingredient is firmly there, you may feel as if something has sunk down. Sometimes it seems to go down with a sound, which is because it moves too heavily. If this happens, immediately breathe through the lower abdomen. Inhale, focus in the lower abdomen, keeping your movements firm. Do not just let it drop or stay at the pelvic floor (perineum, genitalia, buttocks). It should only stay in the lower field. So far, you have not yet bound the perfect *qi* of the Great One, but only finished this step. There is a method to check if you did it correctly.

If the light enters, let it first go to the lower field (Cavity of *Qi*). At this stage, do not let it go anywhere else. If it reaches the pelvic floor, it will slip away out the backdoor. Make sure it reaches the middle field (the Yellow Center or Yellow Court), but it still has to go somewhere else to reach the right place for this practice. Push it into the lower field, then let stem *qi* cover spirit and you will get to a place that, as the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* says, is like "a hen hatching eggs, a dragon nurturing its pearl." The movement is like a hen hatching eggs. Pay attention and let it keep moving. After it moves, release it and see if there is anything in the lower field.

Key Spaces in the Body

Not all classical texts agree on the position of the Cavity of *Qi*; they all present different practices and various positions, depending on the level of cultivation. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* speaks of two locations, one of them being the lower field. The ancients placed the lower field in the triangle between the kidneys and the bladder. The elixir scriptures also note that the Cavity of *Qi* is the Gate

of Destiny. This is not the Gate of Destiny point known from acupuncture, between the second and third lumbar vertebrae, but the Cavity of *Qi.*

The kidneys (here indicating the entire triangle formed by the kidneys and bladder) create a triangular space. The Cavity of *Qi* here is in front of the kidneys. First locate a hole in the center of the two kidneys, then push forward from here, and you will find the Cavity of *Qi* on the same plane. The text also says to move forward for seven and back for three to find an opening. This opening is called center of the womb in Chinese medicine; it is also what you call the lower field. However, it is difficult to tell its exact location. This Cavity of *Qi* connects to the Niwan space above and to the Bubbling Spring point below. This is activated in another step of the practice. The Perfected Ziyang in his *Jindan sibai zi* (Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir; DZ 1081) says:

> This opening is not an ordinary opening.
> It combines the trigrams Heaven and Earth.
> Called the opening of spirit and *qi,*
> It contains the essence of the trigrams Kan and Li.

The Cavity of *Qi* is at the intersection of yin and yang (above and below), where the upper and lower fields connect. You can experience their relationship best after fasting (before you connect). "It contains the essence of the trigrams Fire and Water" means that there is this essence, representing Fire and Water, in the five phases and the Cavity of *Qi* in your body. The *Lingbao bifa* says that you activate them in the *mao* (5-7am) and *you* (5-7pm) hours of the heavenly circuit. The body, then, is a place to store what has been cultivated from completing the *mao* and *you* heavenly circuit.

The *Dacheng tiyao* (Essential Points of the Great Accomplishment) also notes: All the masters of old taught their disciples to gather spirit and let it enter the Cavity of *Qi.* This is it. The Cavity of *Qi* is the Gate of Destiny, located beneath the seventh lumbar vertebra, behind the navel and in front of the kidneys. The ratio of the distance from the Cavity of *Qi* to the navel and kidneys is three to seven. It is located between the two kidneys. The left one represents Water, the right one is Fire. There is an opening between them. It connects to the Niwan Palace above and the Bubbling Spring below. This is the ancestor of great Dao, the root for generating your daily *qi,* the place to produce the lead of the alchemical process. There are countless changes on this path; it is a marvelous engine, issuing many wonderful things. That is why it says, "This opening is not an ordinary opening. It combines the trigrams Heaven and Earth. Called the opening of spirit and *qi,* it contains the essence of the trigrams Fire and Water" Daoists call it the Cavern of *Qi*; Chinese medical doctors call it the Gate of Destiny. When it flourishes, the twelve meridians prosper; when it declines, they wither. When it is open, people live; when it is closed, they die.

The Ancestral Orifice near the head connects to the Niwan Palace and the Heavenly Valley above and the heart in the middle. It can also move to the inside of the body. There are nine palaces in the head, all surrounding a center. The Cavity of *Qi* is yin and located below; the Ancestral Orifice is yang and above. They interrelate by yang rising from yin and yin descending from yang, thus creating two spaces in the body.

When yin *qi* descends into the Cavern of *qi,* it contains a drop of perfect yang *qi*. When perfect *qi* rises from water, it contains a little drop of yin rising. When yang *qi* rises up to the top, a tiny drop of liquid falls down, just a little bit. Yin contains yang *qi*; yang contains yin *qi*. In order to carry out this operation, you need perfect *qi* from inside. Only by having the capacity of perfect *qi* in the organs can you drive them to meet and intermingle.

Although the nose and mouth connect with each other and people can breathe through either, the breath must go through the throat. The throat is called the Twelve-storied Tower. Perfect *qi* inside the organs does not pass through it. As long as the breath passes through the throat and the throat moves, we speak of ordinary respiration. If ordinary respiration cannot connect to the root of the Ancestral Orifice, yin *qi* within yang will not descend. If perfect *qi* inside the organs is not enough to get the Cavity of *Qi* to move, yang *qi* within yin cannot rise. Master Lü said that in order to develop the breathing of the perfected, practice internal breathing three or four times. Do not replace it with breathing through the nose and mouth but let each breath return to its root. The method of experiencing internal breathing is to seal the *qi* after inhaling, then exhale and repeat.

After the external ingredient enters the lower field, there will be some movement. You must shift from external to internal movement, which is quite invisible from the outside. Keep your body very still and unmoving. Find a way to change from external to internal movement. The more the inside of your body moves, the sooner you become a sage. Pull it to the lower field and nourish it by breathing very softly and making sure the lower field is moving. See what is happening inside. Is there anything in the lower field? Is it empty or full? What is inside? Is it a type of *qi,* a liquid, or an object (hard, solid)? Figure it out.

The perfect drop is actually made of the combination of cosmic and body energy. It moves, and you can use it to transform essence into *qi*. From here you can control where it goes, where the *qi* goes, and where it stops. If it moves, there will also be movement in the twelve meridians and extraordinary vessels.

Dispersing the fire actually means to see if the substance in the lower field can spread out. The ancients called it opening the furnace. What remains and cannot spread, the sediments at the bottom, is called cinnabar sand or the elixir. What disperses is the *qi,* the energy that can go outside. There are sandy, powdery elements here called the elixir powder. Finally what sinks to the bottom of the lower field is the elixir. Now the cauldron is set up in the lower field. If the sandy things start running around, you may feel pain in your inner organs, as if

something stimulates them. There may be dust (the stuff hanging on the wall) rising up together with the *qi* and stimulating your organs, causing them pain. If you open the lid, the *qi* will rise up instantly, like a puff, leaving through all the pores. The ancients said that this *qi* is not turbid but mixed: you must release it through the pores. So you need to find out what is in the lower field, maintaining your elixir reservoir with a gentle inhalation and exhalation.

The practice described in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* works very fast, using most ingenious methods and needing only a minimum of energy to produce the greatest effects. The method is: Find the best physical condition (the happiest, most cheerful time), sit cross-legged, look straight ahead with your eyes closed, gazing into the distance. Pull the spirit light in the front of your eyes, to the Mysterious Pass, which is both inside and outside the body. If it is too far away or too close, steady the distance until you see a faint light in front of your eyes. Gather it together until it becomes very small, about the size of a millet grain. If you cannot see it, rotate your eyes.

Daoists believe that the left eye is the sun and the right eye is the moon. The space between matches the Dipper in the sky and is also known as the Heavenly Net opening. In ancient times, it was also known as the Ancestral Orifice. Master Lü explains how to cultivate it in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*.

> All the masters say to maintain sincerity and use it wisely. There is a short cut, which is letting go of all karmic connections with the myriad things. It involves using Brahma. (This is an Indian term, referring to heaven, sun, and moon. In the human body, they are the left eye, right eye, and the area between them. All divine beings have three eyes, for example, the Dipper Mother and the Thunder Lord. With proper practice, the area between the eyebrows opens and is then called the Heavenly Eye.)
>
> The area between the eyebrows is the Heavenly Eye: here the three luminaries enter and exit. (The elixir scriptures call this the place where the sun and moon unite). People can use the three eyes like Brahma, gently moving their intention like polishing a mirror. When the three luminaries gather here, a light appears that is as bright as the sun. From here, with intention lead the light to behind the center and in front of the barrier. (The barrier here is the Double Barrier.)
>
> This place is the Gate of the Mysterious Valley. Guide it there with your intention, and the light will appear. Never forget the two meanings of "mysterious," and the heavenly heart will naturally open. Keep on working on the mystery, and all will be revealed. The thing that you need to remember is not to use primordial to lead it. (Primordial here means that *qi* tends to change, which is neither perfect nor mysterious. If you let yourself be led by this, you fall into the den of monsters.) (ch. 1, "The Heart")

Throughout the cultivation process of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, always keep a keen eye on the relationship between spirit, life-force, and stem *qi*. You must be clear whether spirit leads and stem *qi* follows, or vice versa. Also, you must have proper guidance from an enlightened teacher. The process only works when you have a good teacher-disciple relationship. Master Lü mentions this many times in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. For example,

> Dao is not hidden, but its transmission from mind to mind highly mysterious. It is not really secret, nor is it one mind taking it in some form from another. In fact, Dao cannot really be transmitted at all. Oral teaching is wonderful, but understanding is hard—how much more does this hold true for writing? Thus the highest Dao cherishes mind-to-mind transmission.
>
> If a disciple cannot receive mind transmission, he can take oral instruction; if he cannot understand that, he can be shown in writing.
>
> Our practice methods are rooted in the Great One and result in the Golden Flower. Everything from beginning to end supports each other, and leads you to attain immortality. This Dao has been transmitted from mind to mind among ancient immortals and perfected, one transmitting, the other receiving. First the Highest Lord Lao brought it to light, passing to the Lord of Eastern Florescence from where it was transmitted to the masters of the Northern and Southern lineages.

This is just what we mean. When the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* speaks of spirit consciousness, it means something other than conscious spirit, the main difference being which one leads, spirit or consciousness. When practicing, conscious spirit, primordial spirit, and life force all join into one. When pushing forward, the primordial spirit leads and the conscious spirit follows. When pulling back, the conscious spirit covers the primordial spirit's movement (Daoists believe that the conscious spirit drives the movement of the primordial spirit). There are different theories about whether *qi* or spirit leads. Daoists believe that after pushing it out, you should wrap the primordial spirit with *qi,* then pull them back and let them rest before your eyes.

Daoist scriptures called this the external ingredient (to become a great ingredient once refined). To return the external ingredient to the furnace, inhale and bring it in through the opening to the Niwan, then move it down through the three fields. Return it to the furnace, which is also called cultivating the broken line. This step is difficult, since it must move slowly: do not do this fast, lest the *qi* drops. Make sure to keep it slow. Inhale, the eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavern of *Qi*. Let it move down slowly. After it reaches the lower field, do not listen to the guided instructions but softly focus in the lower abdomen. At this time, the stem *qi* of the five phases is here: this is called spirit entering the stem *qi*.

When the stem *qi* enters to the lower field, it is yin. Things that enter from the outside are yang. Thus, we speak of yin wrapping yang. This makes it be alive. If yang wraps yin, it is not alive. Slowly focus in the lower abdomen, and it will move. After focusing it in the lower field, slowly focus some more. Contain the external ingredient (the spirit light) in the cauldron (the lower field), keeping the fire below. Next, let the cauldron slowly rise. It is unusual for people to pull the external ingredient in and deposit it into the lower field, then stop. Also, very few people are able to use it properly. Because women are maternal, they must pull it during the practice. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* says, "Success in the practice depends on maintaining sincerity" (ch. 1).

Without sincerity, refinement will not work. Maintaining sincerity means having a faithful heart and sincere speech. The heart does not refer to the organ, but the mind with its ability to transform. Daoist says that "when the human mind dies, Dao-mind flourishes." This sentence is an aphorism. The human mind here is one with the power to transform. It means that as long as mind, heart, pericardium (outer membrane), and body remain unmoving, Dao-mind manifests. Dao-mind is a kind of vibration that comes from outside the body universe, a natural vibration of the greater cosmos.

If the human mind settles down, Dao-mind manifests and you can hear the sounds of the universe. You can awaken to the world. The *Daode jing* emerged after Laozi realized this. The word sincere in "a faithful heart and sincere speech" in Daoism means that "silence is better than sound," that is, you better use gestures and facial expressions to convey your thoughts and feelings. Thus Daoist cultivation practices rely on the personal transmission from the teacher, who always give oral instructions which you remember by heart. Thus you "maintain sincerity." When you activate this, all impressions and feelings make a strong impact, what is called "honoring the mind-to-mind transmission," "connecting through looks and smiles," and "accepting teachings with tears of gratitude." All these expressions refer to meeting in person and talking face to face.

The Spirit Light

You can see the spirit light with your eyes closed, but you cannot see it with your eyes open. This is the orifice of brightness that causes people to be dazzled. Daoists believe that what the eyes see is not necessarily true, in fact, it is pieced together by tiny bits and pieces and if without *qi* it will collapse. When people look with their bare eyes, they only see the outline and form of things, while what they see with their eyes closed is very real. After seeing the spirit light, do not try to determine if it is real; first see if you can push it. If it moves, take it down to the lower field. Focus it there, and you may feel some heat, which confirms that it is there. If you do not feel anything, there are two possibilities: it is just an empty light, or it has not been properly pulled in.

Trained to a certain degree, the spirit light will rotate on its own. After it rotates, a passageway may appear and it moves very fast, hard to control. At this time, do not follow it: whether it rotates out or in, do not go into it but stay out. This is not because your level is not strong enough, but because your power of spirit is not sufficient. What you know is so little. In case you go in and want to come back out, you need to have a method, you need to chant a mantra, or you can shout at yourself. Sometimes this will bring you back, but if you find you cannot come back, you need to chant a mantra. This time, I need to teach you the mantra, actually a pronunciation, and after you intone the sound correctly, you can come back. Otherwise, you are free from pain but you just cannot stand up. You just cannot come back, and this is very dangerous. On the other hand, if you chant the mantra before the spirit even starts to rotate, you are wasting an opportunity for learning.

You need to practice with the Dipper line to a certain degree before a passageway will appear. When you have a passageway in the human body, we speak of "the light of life and death." Keep looking straight ahead into the distance. This is the present. You are right here in the present moment. Nothing exists beyond it. All the things you do are for this small point. If the point deviates, you will make mistakes, this is why there is an upper field.

There is a passageway at the Heavenly Eye opening. The ancients called this the passageway of transmission. It conveys cosmic, transmitted, and original energy. It is the best opening to channel and mutually transform them. When calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, look with both eyes and the light will appear. This is where the body and cosmic energies mix, an empty space that you create on your own and only you can see it. Others cannot see it, so it is difficult to prove its existence scientifically. There are two ways to prove it, by feeling and through perception. Human beings need to explore both.

The upper field is the center of the nine palaces in the head. If it shifts position, it creates a bias in perception; if it moves on an angle, like to the top, we call it paradise; if it shifts down to the bottom, we speak of hell. Here we are talking about today (the present) and the three time dimensions (past, present, and future lives). Christians, called them the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son. Buddhists speak of the buddhas of past, present, and future. All religions start from here. Our life is like a straight line. They say if you did a lot of good deeds in your past life, then in this life you will have a certain position (angle) and may live in paradise. If you did not do good deeds in the past, you may be living in hell.

If you do not do good things in this life, you may go to hell after death. The good deeds you do in this life are the result of your past life, which means the good deeds you did in your past life have passed on to you. The bad things you do in this life will pass you on to the next one. On the other hand, hell does not pass down from one generation to another. There are six paths of rebirth in the center of the upper field: they are the nine palaces. One method

teaches how to turn your vision inward toward the nine palaces, but you have not reached that level yet. First practice rotating the Dipper, letting it spin. When it finishes rotating, you can start fasting and may be able to advance your perception.

Start by clearly exploring the present and ignore past and future. Why can the spirit light rotate? If you force it to rotate artificially, it is hard to spin. It should be spinning, but it does not. There are two directions of rotation, clockwise and counterclockwise. During guided instructions I cannot say whether you should rotate clockwise forward and come back counterclockwise, or vice versa. I can only tell you to rotate it where it is, then push forward while rotating. I cannot tell you the direction.

Some people go forward clockwise, some counterclockwise. This is because these are two kinds of people, like our hands. From these little things you can read the two kinds of people, their character, mental state, and way of doing things. According to your personal situation you can decide if you want to move clockwise or counterclockwise. Push and pull the spirit light while rotating it. At the beginning of the practice, it may not be easy to move, it may be easier if you are extremely clever.

After it starts to rotate, you need to push the spirit light out, then pull it to the lower field. The main purpose of this is to receive cosmic energy. The ancients said that it is best to rotate with the same speed as the moon and the stars. For that, you need to know the rotational speed of the celestial bodies. We do know the speed of the earth's rotation is to go once around the sun per day. You can only see one side of the moon's rotation, so you know which side is front and which is back. Serious training is very tiring. The starting point is different for each rotation method as are the direction and the level of each person.

If a scene appears, first, do not try and distinguish if it is real, but have confidence in yourself. You need to understand, though, that the things you see are entirely our own. The six lines show, that what you see is not your present life: it is your past life or possibly the life to come. You will not see other people, and you cannot become a different person.

There are two types of swastika, one rotating left 卍, the other right 卐. In the original Tibetan religion of Bon, the left-turning swastika was the symbol of eternal change, which is why Tibetan Buddhist prayer wheels spin from left to right and write it 卍. The Sanskrit swastika goes the other way. It was a symbol of good luck and auspicious sign in ancient Indian religion. During the Tang dynasty, Empress Wu introduced it to China, pronounced the character *wan*, and gave it the meaning "collection of good fortune and virtue."

Chinese Buddhists have different translations of the sign. During the Northern Wei, a scripture uses the word to indicate the myriad things. Under the Dynasty, the Buddhist monk Xuanzang translated it as "virtue," emphasizing the Buddha's boundless beneficence. Empress Wu also related it to the

myriad things and interpreted it to mean the collection of good fortune and virtue in the world. Hitler selected a 45 degree black diamond version of the same sign, with counterclockwise rotation and outward spin. It is important to differentiate and clearly understand each one. The basic implication in traditional China is that there is no end to the myriad things.

Chapter 6 of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, "Signs of Verification When Returning the Light," mentions the light of the seven openings. It says that you can see sunrise, sunset, earth, prisms, days, months, and refined light, even less your ancestral moral character. The Eight Immortals did not live in the same era, but they ultimately behaved like a single family. A saying associated with them has, "Your ancestral moral character defines your family." When breathing through the Ancestral Orifice, take a look and see if it is inside or outside and look for your prenatal stem *qi*.

The elixir opening mentioned in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* alternatively refers the body (in the elixir field), the air, or the ground. It may also refer to an elixir opening in the unseen world (that is, calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice). You must distinguish between them.

The spirit residence, Niwan Palace, and the upper elixir field are all the same place, but their names change with different stages of cultivation, as do their practice methods. Before the upper elixir field is cultivated, it is called spirit residence. Ordinary people have it; in everyone, it houses spirit. In basic cultivation, it is called the Niwan Palace; and when practicing internal alchemy, it becomes the upper elixir field. There is a channel or passage from this place, which can appear in two directions. When working with the spirit light, first gather it into one point, then push it forward and out, then pull it back.

Once the spirit light rotates, look into the distance through this passageway (look straight ahead) and the Three Worlds will appear. If you look back (behind yourself), the three time dimensions will manifest. Some, when rotating forward, see many images or spaces; some, when rotate back, will scenes from childhood, even things they do not remember. This passageway is the channel for all human cultivation. There are two open angles in the front and back of the channel; this is what Master Lü called the karmic connections of the three time dimensions of human life. Daoists call this channel the Three Worlds (upper, middle, lower), the three time dimensions (past, present, and future). Christians call it the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The spirit light cannot be influenced by the seven emotions and six desires; it is the life force in the human body. People should have the seven emotions and six desires; they should feel them in their body. No matter how high a level a person has attained, as long as the physical body exists, there are the seven emotions and six desires, in most people evoked by materialistic things. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* says, the reason you cannot see the spirit light is not because the seven emotions and six desires exist. But the seven emotions and six desires it speaks of are not the same as those of ordinary people.

The seven emotions and six desires in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* come in three levels, relating to the three time dimensions. When spirit rises, there are the seven emotions and six desires, matching the thirty-nine levels in the *Xiuzhen tu* and other texts. This does not affect the ability of the spirit light to emerge, retract, be pushed, or used. The only consideration is when the spirit light appears and how you want to use it.

The statements that the Great One contains perfect *qi* and that it contains perfection refer to the theories of prenatal and postnatal states that is the relationship between substance and function. The *Wupian lingwen* notes that the Great One contains perfect *qi,* which you activate when you calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice as described in *the Taiyi jinhua zongzhi.* However, for now you practice the Great One contains perfection. You are not yet at the stage where you cultivate its perfect *qi.*

The practice before uniting the disks of the sun and moon is called calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice or the Great One embraces perfect *qi.* The *Wupian lingwen* says,

> This point of extreme yang *qi,* that is, the prenatal *qi* of perfect oneness, is called the Great One embraces perfect *qi.*
>
> Inner nature and life-destiny are the root and source of spirit and *qi. Qi* is the water of heavenly oneness, while spirit is the *qi* embraced by the Great One."

Patriarch Qiu's *Dadan zhizhi* says,

> In the vast mists of primordial chaos, male and female follow each other. The vast mists signify a time when stem *qi* was not yet divided; following each other means that yin and yang were intermingled and not separate from one another. Matching this state of non-separation, your spirit is coalesced and gathered in darkness, chaotically merged in oneness.
>
> On the inside, you are unaware of your body; on the outside, you are unaware of the universe. You are completely at one with Dao, the myriad worries all gone, merged with chaos like sands in the sea. Ineffable and beyond naming, if we had to call it something, we would name it the state of the Great One embracing perfect *qi,* or again, the unified *qi* of prenatal existence. It is the mother of the golden elixir.
>
> When *qi* enters the navel, it becomes breath; when spirit enters the *qi,* it becomes the embryo; when the embryo combines with the breath, we speak of the Great One embracing the perfect.

The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* speaks of many kinds of circulating, different in meaning and methods. There is a type called the light of the body returns, which indicates a practice of breathing through the pores and focusing on the body as the *qi* circulates throug the body.

> Once you turn the light around, the energies of the entire body pay their respects, as when an emperor has established the capital and founded his throne. (ch. 1)

> Open your eyes and look straight ahead, pull the spirit light back between the eyebrows, then gently close the eyes: this is one way to return the light. Close your eyes and calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. Let your eyes move toward the middle, look at the light, then gently push it forward and pull it back: this is another way to return the light. It also says, "Turning the light around is not just turning around the essence of the body, but turning around the very energy of creation. (ch. 3)

> First, you only see a dot coming back from the distance. When that happens, pull the light back into the Niwan, then move it down along the broken line until it reaches the Cavern of *qi,* the elixir field, the Northern River, and the Kun Palace: this is yet another way to return the light. Pay special attention during practice. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* contains the sentence, "Matters that come up require you to respond; things that come up require you to recognize them. (ch. 7)

The things mentioned here are not those of the lower three realms, but of the middle and upper ones. In the understanding of ordinary people, if matters arise, they know what they are: they are concrete entities that pass before our eyes, matters we can recognize. So, in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*, Master Lü asks, "If matters arise, do you really know what they are? If things pass before your eyes, can you really recognize them?"

In actual fact, you can't. Matters arise, things pass before your eyes, and you really have no clue or recognize them properly. Ordinary people rarely know what went on yesterday or how they changed between then and today. In the old days, there was a practice that started with a light (today you can use a flashlight) dazzling right before your eyes. Next, you close your eyes and notice how the light still dances before them. This demonstrates the Daoist understanding that we create things for and by ourselves. An object (or light) arises, but do you really know what it is? Is it spirit light or the light of consciousness? When does it arrive? At this time, what are your eyes really seeing? Daoists believe that it is dangerous if in daily life we are not aware of matters arising and do not recognize things properly.

You may focus on it but cannot see it. Bring it very close and it looks like a cloud, a sparkling disk: thus it becomes a thing. When a thing shows up and you are not familiar with it, you may ask: What is this? In ancient times, it was called the spirit light. But is it really spirit light? When did it come? This is the problem we want to solve. You cannot see anything during practice since your eyes are closed. In ancient time, this was called, "matters arise, but we do not respond." Actually we originally had this light, but we do not know when it comes or how to use it, so it is impossible to catch. There are several possibilities:

1. The *qi* of the circulating light in the body does not obey the lord, leading to a situation when the body universe is not properly formed. If you want to turn the light around, but you have no way to circulate the body's essence, you must concentrate on breathing through the pores.

2. When there are guided instructions, make sure your breathing is very soft, following the movements of space. The space moves, inhale; the space opens, exhale. Do not follow me or move along with things.

3. Inhale, focus the *qi* in the lower field; exhale, release. Do this several times, and the movement of the lower field follows your breathing. Once breathing moves smoothly, it can follow the movement of the lower field. Focus in the lower field, inhale; release, exhale. Once you know how to do this, you have already ascended and become a person of heaven and earth. No longer a separate entity, you now "form one organism with the myriad things" and will no longer be enticed to follow others.

4. It will definitely come, but we do not know when. At this time, we need to wait.

All religions need to start by first cultivating the eyes. The purpose of practicing the methods of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* is to discover an alternative space. There should be a space other than our body. Research has found that just before they pass away, people all have a common behavioral characteristic. They will suddenly sit up, struggle, and look around. Religious groups think that this action shows that they are entering an alternative space. Similarly, when we see something during practice, are these things part of our heart-and-mind or acquired? Do they maybe come from far away? Be sure to put questions like these while practicing according to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*.

Calming the Spirit

Calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice involves ways to cultivate, refine, use, and nurture it. If you don't practice these well, maybe you cannot see it. Actually, these practices already get you to the cultivation methods of the *Lingbao bifa*.

"Cultivate" here refers to basic meditation. The purpose is to allow each individual to naturally steady the inherent pattern of the body. Calm down with eyes closed, keep the body unmoving and steady the breathing. This will let the

body be naturally stable, including also the digestive and endocrine systems. Steady it until you feel clear-headed, then start the next practice. This step is also called purifying the heart and life-force.

"Refine" indicates the process of raising the head, looking straight ahead, and seeing far into the distance, the farther the better. Look into the distance and see if it there is something luminous or bright. At this moment, it is important to be very clear about this. Pulling the spirit light back is also a form of refining.

"Use" means to let the eyes look at the spirit light. Find out if you can see it; if you cannot, go back and refine it again. Push the spirit light slowly forward, then pull it back and stop. Use again. In other words, "use" is the process of pushing and pulling, moving the light back and forth in front of your eyes.

"Nurture," finally, means to let the light enter the lower field. Inhale, gently focus in the lower abdomen; exhale, release. "Like a hen hatching an egg, a dragon nurturing its pearl."

Some versions of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* cite the *Jingang jing* (Diamond Sutra) to speak of the state of "no others, of no self, of no multitude of living beings." Only when there is none of these can the Golden Flower manifest. Unless you are a monk of high virtue, this is hard to realize. So what most people see is a manifest or floating light, but how do you know which is which? This is the problem you need to solve when practicing the methods of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. If you sit cross-legged with a serious mind, you will not see anything because you are in manifest state. Sometimes when you lie in bed, the light may come, which is because you are in state of nothingness. You can look at it, but cannot see it, and it is hard to catch—for just the same reason.

Chapter 6 of *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* refers to the *Yingguan jing* (Amitayurdhyana Sutra), which speaks of "the sun setting over the ocean with trees in rows." The sun is the state of reality: we can only see it during the day. In the evening we cannot see it, but we know that it is still there, because it rises the next day. In fact, we cannot see sunrise or sunset: what we see is just its appearance, that is, after the sun has risen. We can use the same analogy when discussing calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. If we see the light disappear, we know it will come back at some point, but when? Thus, we use the state of nothingness to capture the state of manifest reality.

You cannot see it yet it is there. So the problem is how to find a way to make it return. Long past childhood, even over forty, you are in your sunset time. You may try to let the sun rise again. In practice, there is no self, you do not exist: so who are you? If you had no name when you were born, who are you? This is the time when no-self manifests. Even before you were born, there was a state—the state of reality. Plus there was the mind of no form. Then it appeared, and it can come again by calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

Guided instructions teach how to enclose the primordial spirit, letting the conscious spirit control the body. This means controlling the body by force.

When you force it to move, the primordial spirit has already shut down. Then it separates and divides into two parts: within our body is the source of primordial spirit and outside the body is another primordial spirit. The primordial spirit within our body remains and finally transforms first into *qi,* then into essence, to be stored in the lower field. This is one method of laying the foundation.

When you get to a certain level, amazing things appear. There are a lot of things such as in dreams that are not necessarily fake. Because we see it ourselves and there is movement, it feels very real. We can learn a lot of things in a dream, especially when our eyes are closed. Dreams teach us a lot, as is documented in the scriptures. Thus, chapter 1 begins with a story about the friendship between female and male, it is all in a dream. In fact you can learn big sections of the work in dreams rather than from oral teaching. Consider animals, no one teaches them but they also learn from dreams. So if we see pictures, whether it is true or not, write it down. There is a possibility that when you come to a place, you may find out that you have seen it in the dream or when calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.

When calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, use the life force. When you sit in meditation and it appears naturally, make sure to seize it. Subtly look for a bright spot. It may be overly large but not dense enough, thus it is important to gather the spirit light toward the middle. Sometimes it is fleeting, always moving, which is because it does not have any weight. It may look very bright, but it is hard to push. No matter how hard you push, it does not move. This means its weight is too heavy: it is heavier than your density so you cannot push it. Also, this means that it is still overly large. So, make it smaller until it reaches the size of a millet grain. At this point, it is very bright. When it becomes a tiny point, let it move around, observe its position and see where it goes. If it does not listen to you after it rises up, there is still the possibility of it turning into *qi.*

Once the spirit light appears, you must absolutely not move the body and especially the legs, no matter how painful it is. If you move the legs, the spirit light will not recognize you and it will not matter whether you can pull it back. However, if you can pull it back, you can start to slowly tame and train it. One side of the *Xiuzhen tu* has the drawing of a horse; the other shows a monkey. When you send the spirit light out, it has the characteristics of these two animals: it loves to run and jump about. Thus, taming it is like training a wild horse or a monkey. However, it is also unlike a horse or monkey, because we can ride a horse and let it gallop, fully controlling how and where it runs, but we cannot control the monkey's life force or natural being. The only thing you can do is slowly train the spirit light, only concerned that you cannot see it since what you cannot see cannot be trained.

You may become aware of it yet do not know it for what it is. As long as you see the light, no matter what its color (white, red, blue, etc.), it is all right. Are you aware of it or do you know it? You may be aware without knowing;

you may touch and yet not reach it. How do you judge whether it's real? Shrink it until it is tiny, then pull it into the lower field and nourish it here. As you do that, it should feel slightly hot. With a little heat you gather the energy in the lower field. As long as it accumulates, the lower field starts to heat up. Let this vaporize throughout the entire body. At this point you move from awareness to knowledge, which means that the light has been there: it has moved down to the lower field and burst out from there.

Since your eyes cannot see it when it arrives, since you cannot feel it or seize it, you have no prior knowledge or awareness of its presence. If you cannot seize it, but it does in fact exist, what actually is it? Modern science has not confirmed it, but sitting in meditation allows you to see the light, big or small. Scientists think it is just an inner awareness or imagination, however, once we pull it into the lower field, it heats up, proving that the light is real. This is the prime way of finding out whether you actually have the spirit light.

Be sure to wait until you become aware of it, then tell others. If you only have a vague feeling, don't tell anyone. Once you have clear awareness, you can speak from your spiritual heart, talking about it calmly and clearly. If you vaguely notice it inside or became aware of it, you cannot speak about it clearly. If there is just awareness, do not talk about it.

As you pull it back, inhale softly, moving from the upper through the middle and to the lower field. You may not be able to pull it into the lower field every time. It is not clear how it gets there, but it gets there nonetheless. Be sure to move down slowly, let the spirit be in front with the *qi* following. Once spirit gets there, the *qi* arrives. Sometimes spirit does not actually get there, which is why guided instructions use a lot of words and take a long time. Inhale softly and let the spirit light descend from the upper and middle into the lower field. Next, your guide will say, "Lower your eyelids to look at your nose. The eyes observe the noes, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*." This is how the spirit should move; this is how you must think about it. Let the spirit light follow the instructions as it descends.

The body is dependent on being nurtured by body energy. Once it is properly nurtured, transmitted energy will appear, *qi* will vaporize and slowly rise up. After that, what should you do? At this time, women can produce the elixir. When you nurture the lower field, some people will find the body has a faint light or radiates. Also, there might be a light inside. This is known as empty space generates brightness. This can occur under several circumstances:

1. The empty space of the chamber within generates brightness. This is called seizing it outside. You feel that the outside of the body shines brightly.

2. The empty chamber within generates brightness. You feel the light shining inside your head and body.

3. The body divides into four parts: half are bright and half are not.

It is important to learn by heart what kind of light it is, so be sure to figure it out, especially when practicing women's alchemy. In the body the yin and

yang sides stick together. The *Lingbao bifa* makes it very clear that you first need to divide yin and yang, because men and women are different. For men the left side is yang, whereas the right side is yin. For women the right side is yang, the left is yin. When only half of the body is bright, for example, the right side in a man, it is called yang within yin. If the right side of a woman is bright, it is called yang within yang. If half of it glows, remember the lunar date. When empty space generates brightness, this sometimes relates to the calendar date.

This is the time when you need to learn the alchemy calendar, which is different from the lunar or any other calendar currently used. The main difference is that it has both fixed and uncertain variations. The *Lingbao bifa* poses thirty days as a baseline, as opposed to the current standard set by people, which works with twenty-nine or thirty. As a result, the date in alchemy may be later or earlier than the standard. You need to make sure on your own.

Sometimes, moreover, the upper half is bright and the lower is not, or vice versa. This is common in both men and women. For example, if a little bit of the head shines forth but the torso below is dull, this is because the head is yang and the abdomen is yin.

All things called yang are certainly transformations of *qi,* manifestations of different kinds. Thus, the light before your eyes can sometimes be very bright and you can see it clearly; sometimes it is rather dull and appears more like fog. Daoists believe that this reflects a state of *qi* transforming. As you learn to retrieve the vapor and concentrate it, making it denser, collecting it, and memorizing its movement, we speak of "transforming essence into *qi.*" This technique has been used by our ancestors for over 2,450 years; it is already described in the *Huangdi neijing.* If anyplace hurts, find a way to transform the *qi,* shift it, and move it to that place. From here, practice simple breathing or basic movements. The pain will slowly ease.

If there is bright light inside your head, turn your vision inward and become aware of it. Practice pore breathing in the head, which is especially good if you suffer from insomnia. Slowly pull it together and make it smaller. In the beginning this may be hard, but keep at it, slowly pulling it back and together. Do not worry about where it goes. At this point, the guided instructions may already have moved ahead and started to focus on the nose or mouth. So make sure to keep it small, then let it go to the indicated location on its own. There is no difference for men and women. Empty space generates brightness in the upper or lower locations in both, but there is a difference between whether it generates on the left or right.

If brightness appears from empty space, most people will just waste it. You, however, will pull it back and never let it go. If you don't, it means that you do not cherish yourself. Let it appear, breathe a few times, and it will slowly come back. Strengthen your intention and make it one: at this time, you do not want to have two intentions.

Brightness from empty space often appears during quiet times, or when you have no operations in progress. It is hard to make it appear while practicing. Practicing is tiresome, and even if you make your breathing soft, even, and long, it may not appear. So, just go and lie down. There is no need to sit up. Just let it appear. Practice breathing into the area where it shows up. If the light appears around you, quickly pull it back by breathing through the pores.

After practicing calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice to a certain level, the light will start to rotate. To get from rotating the sun and moon (the eyes) to rotating the spirit light, you undergo a process, which may be destructive. Take hold of the spirit light before it is destroyed, since energy can explode and generate substance. Calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice generates things from nothing. This is basically the same as what modern physics says on the origin of the universe, i. e., theory of formation and development is basically the same. When calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, you first look straight ahead but see nothing. Daoist scriptures note that the universe began with nothing. Laozi's *Daode jing* also states this.

Modern cosmology postulates that the universe came from nothing and slowly generated many small particles. The particles gathered and began to rotate, leading to the formation of galaxies and planets. This process is very similar to the appearance of the spirit light. You practice and suddenly see something moving in front of your eyes, a vapor-like substance moving. Push it away, then pull it back. After you move it like this, it will appear like an entity, getting bigger and bigger like a snowball. Push it out, then pull it back, practicing again and again. Eventually, after you push it out, it will explode.

Cosmological Implications

This seems unreal, because other people cannot see it. However, after pulling it back and forth, it will change. When calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, something appears before you. It becomes more and more like an entity and starts to rotate. After the spirit light congeals, it will rotate, too. It also appears in many different states, such as solar and lunar eclipses. The third step of the *Lingbao bifa*, on the mating of dragon and tiger, describes this:

> When the Prime first divided, Great Beginning arose.
> Within Great Beginning, Great Nonbeing arose.
> Within Great Nonbeing, Great Emptiness arose.
> Within Great Emptiness, Great Space arose.
> Within Great Space, Great Substance arose.
> Great Substance is none other than heaven and earth.
> Heaven and earth consist of clear and turbid substance.
> Their substance is like an egg, containing colors of dark and yellow.
> Therefore, they are just one thing within Great Space.

The chapter on "Determining the Fabric of Destiny" of the *Xiaojing wei* (Apocryphon on the Book on Filial Piety) has:

> Before heaven and earth divided, there were Great Change, Great Initiation, Great Beginning, Great Simplicity, and the Great Ultimate: these are the five movements. The stage when forms and symbols were not yet separate is called Great Change. The stage when primordial *qi* started to sprout is called Great Initiation. The stage when *qi* and forms separated is called Great Beginning. The stage when forms changed and had substance is called Great Simplicity. The stage when substance and forms were established is called the Great Ultimate. Gradually the five *qi* transformed: this is called the five movements.

Before the universe divided into heaven and earth, it underwent five stages, passing through a gradual process from Great Change to Great Ultimate. This also signals the progression from the stage when forms and symbols had not yet divided to the establishment of substantial entities. The same chapter also thus outlines a strict and detailed division of the gradual process of the unfolding *qi* into different forms, calling them Great Change, Great Initiation, Great Beginning, Great Simplicity, and the Great Ultimate: they are the five *qi*.

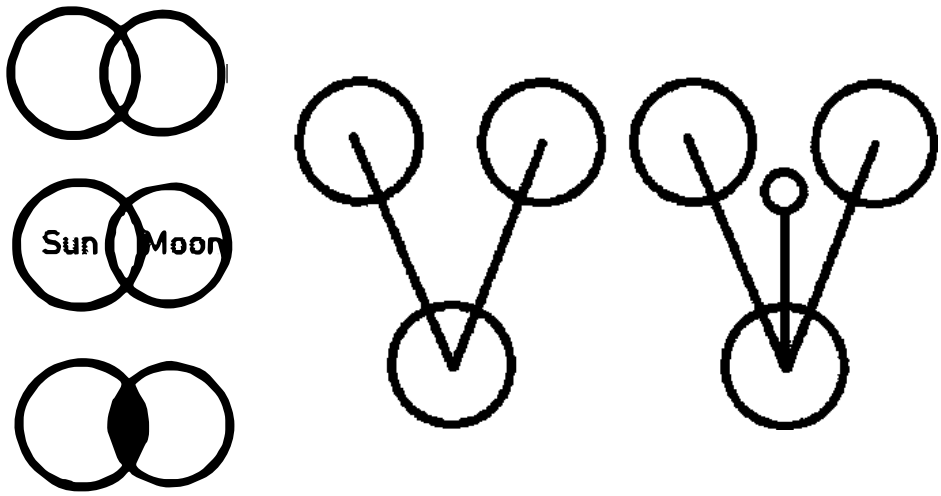
The chapter "Reading the Hexagram Qian" of the *Yiwei* (Apocryphal Commentary to the *Yijing*) has:

> Before forms arose in a state of formlessness, how did the trigrams of Heaven and Earth appear? Thus we speak of the stages of Great Change, Great Initiation, Great Beginning, and Great Simplicity. During Great Change, *qi* did not yet exist; during Great Initiation, it started to arise. During Great Beginning, forms came to be; and during Great Simplicity, substance began.

This text only lists four stages, leaving out Great Ultimate. Still, they reflect the process of the formation of spirit light. Patriarch Lü, in his *Daode jing* commentary, notes: "If the heart-and-mind is not empty, it cannot function; if it is not void, it cannot measure. Only in a state of emptiness and void can it go along with things."

Not being able to measure means it cannot judge what enters; only when it is empty can it prevent things from entering even if they come close. Practice until a central line appears in the nine palaces of the head, then the central vessel will appear. This vessel runs in the middle of the body: it is easy to find. The first time you practice this, its appearance is very brief. If it suddenly appears but quickly disappears, you may start to see it rotate. Without the central line, though, the nine palaces will not rotate. The Heavenly Eye opens to the Niwan Palace, which is central among the nine palaces in the head. Thus is it is called

the central line. The left eye is the sun, the right eye is the moon. The sun and moon rotate around the Big Dipper line. In ancient times, the training method is as documented in the chart below



The figure on the left (above) is empty: it is called empty vision cannot see. Next, the middle of the left figure shows the eyes moving toward the middle and joining together. From here, they look into the far distance but cannot see the outside, which makes them equivalent to the sun and moon. How do you see something in front of your eyes as they are closed? Steady your vision in the distance (as shown in the lower part of the left figure). Steady it and slowly you will feel that there is a glow in front of your eyes. Slowly gather it into a tiny point. This point has different names at different stages: perfect inner nature, perfect life force, spirit light. The latter is most general, but different stages use various names.

As the eyes look straight ahead, pull it back to right before them and look at that point. To find the standard distance, perform the following when you have time. Touch the top of your head with one hand, then look at your arm. Look at it until the arm becomes very thin, which means your eyes have found the right position. The lower in the first figure shows a black overlap, which means you use an object to block the sight in front. This needs to be practiced with both eyes closed.

Next, it changes as shown in the central figure of the diagram. Lowering your eyelids and look at your nose: the eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavity of *Qi*. The lower field changes into the Cavern of *qi,* which requires you to look down slowly on the inside, whereas outside the body is the measuring tool. Let it move down along the broken line and pull it in. Again, the eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart, and the heart observes the Cavern of *Qi*. In some people, it goes down along the Conception Vessel in the front of the torso. If it goes down this yin side, do not bring it into the front genitals, because men will have wet dreams and women will have fantasies. Instead, lift the front genital area, pull back the spirit light, and nurture it in the lower field.

Letting the life-force light go down first is called the two *qi* of yin and yang match the five phases. First, silently circulate the five phases, then calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. This is called spirit entering *qi*. These methods have different effects. If you calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice without silently circulating the five phases, after the spirit light reaches the lower field, something will come up. This is known as achieving the Sword Tablet. If you first silently circulate the five phases and then send the spirit light into the lower field, it will go down to the opening of life and death, and you will have Three Sets of Soldiers. Patriarch Lü wrote about the lower field: "Mouth to mouth, orifice to orifice." We have to notice real feelings here.

After pulling the spirit light into the lower field, two possible conditions arise, called life and death. Take a deep breath, let the spirit light descend from the front of your eyes into the lower field, passing through the Heavenly Eye as well as the upper and middle fields. See if the lower field can move. If it does not move, you are in a state of death, which does not mean you are actually dead. Inhale the spirit light and let it enter the lower field. Sometimes it will move up and sometimes it will not. Pay close attention as you meditate. The following overview shows what happens in both conditions.

Basics	Life: Practice calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice first, then silently circulate the five phases.	Death: Silently circulate the five phases first, then practice calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice.
Birth	The time of rebirth: the time that things in lower field are dead, then reborn.	The time I was born.
Sequence	First practice calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, then let the perfect yang (ingredient) enter the body and move into the lower field. Next, silently circulate the five phases. The stem *qi* of the five phases enters the lower field, the body vibrates.	First, silently circulate the five phases, so that the stem *qi* of the five phases enters the lower field and it is full. Then practice calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. A little bit of perfect yang enters the five phases. After finishing, we speak of the Great Ultimate containing perfection. Begin to form the embryo.
Results	First collect ingredients, then let yang *qi* fill the lower field. Next, silently move the stem *qi* of the five phases to the lower field. Yang is outside; yin is inside. This is a dynamic state, since it is moving. It is dynamic not static.	The stem *qi* of the five phases is yin, while the ingredients collected outside are yang. (This is called collecting ingredients). This forms a state of yin enveloping yang (one positive and one negative). Laozi

		said that yin embracing yang means living. It is an image of being alive. For everything, if yin is outside and yang inside, it certainly is living. Transforming into another substance, it will change. It is stable and alive.
Principles & Interpretation	If yang is on the outside and yin on the inside, it will definitely move, it will split. Then it is hard to settle it down. You have generated something. Vibrations generate lead and mercury. The *qi* of the five phases begins to split after it enters the lower field, and there will be lead, mercury, and other stuff. Sometimes lead is reduced; sometimes mercury flies off. After the separation of the five phases, something rises up and goes down, runs to the left and right. After this, it is no longer the *qi* of the five phases. Instead, there are mercury flying up and lead going down. Every time the classical scriptures mention elixir circulation, they speak of metal ingredients like lead and mercury. Lead is in the body, but it is not easy to find. If you separate the five phases after circulating it to the lower field, you can start to move it. Find a way to transform the dynamic pattern into a static one. The aim of moving is to find the weakness in our five phases. Which of them is weak? Shelter the weak one and ignore the strong one. Find which is weak and enhance it.	This process produces cell-like things, so we speak of forming the embryo. When the scriptures talk about this stage, they use words like golden lord, yellow woman, infant, and maiden. That is to say, when these terms appear, it means that spirit light from calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice enters into the five phases, so it can produce stuff. This is also in line with Laozi's idea that Dao is the underlying principle behind the creation of the myriad things. The order of the process gives rise to the myriad beings, beginning when Dao produced the generative force. It grows something within the five phases. After collecting the ingredients, let them enter the lower field as you calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. This is like planting a seed: it will grow into something. Refining and transforming essence to *qi*, and *qi* to spirit affirms the existence of five phases. In different stages, different terms apply, and different results appear. Here what emerges are our life force and inner nature. When something is missing during the embryo stage, we must get help from

		the golden lord, yellow woman, infant, and the maiden. (These can be found in the body, but not the way you imagine.) Overall, this signals the process of human growth. The five phases are mostly about internal organs, whose movements generate *qi*. After there is *qi,* the inner organs generate a pathway for it. When learning about this process, use the best descriptions, from masters Zhang Ziyang and Qiu Chuji.
Cultivation Mehod	By all means, control it with intentional consciousness (conscious spirit). Learn to exercise control over the primordial spirit and its movement in the body. Make sure to watch and observe. Control the movement inside the body to prevent it moving aimlessly. If the movement has no route or does not know where to go, you lose control. At this time, body and consciousness are vying with each another. When there is movement inside, find a way to control it and to manage its direction. According to theory, you need this ability to carry a little piece of perfect mercury and lead when it appears. Lift it up when it appears, turn it around, and return it when it goes out, moving it back and forth. Make sure it keeps moving, never mind if you do not catch it. It only moves in the human body, unable to get out. If much of it comes in but cannot get out, benefits arise. If it rises up to the mouth, it may produce a little something. This is the best to aim for, since even a drop of essence is enough.	This method is very stable. After it enters, the *qi* of the five phases wraps the external ingredients, notably if they are small and not big. The ingredients—whether small, big, or even the immortal elixir—are not determined from the outside. Our own skill determines if they form an embryo after they enter the body. We need to find out if the liquid produced from the vaporization of the five phases is enough to nourish the external seed. To dissipate it has benefits. The body gets slightly hot and the transformations of body energy become vigorous and generate something very excellent. What appears after this is yin embracing yang power. This is necessary to generate the embryo. Once you grow it, it rises up, the yang spirit splits and appears, coming out of the husk. Also, another body appears outside this body.
Result	This process cannot form an elixir, it can only split things. It continuously	Eixir circulation generates the self. After it reaches the lower

	transforms and is always finding the weakest part in the five phases. If the five phases are balanced and very even, it will change direction and move up. Rotating, it ultimately transforms the entire body. Afterwards it splits the five phases and eliminates the substances transmitted from previous lives (both good and bad). The transmitted energy that exists during rebirth is severed as you split the five phases. This includes body, heart, spirit, and thoughts—all located inside. Also, the body will be completely healthy.	field, the lower field moves. Sometimes you need to hold the breath, letting the internal *qi* push the lower field to move downwards. The lower field will move softly, which can feel uncomfortable, because you are essentially growing a new tooth, It needs to grow, even if it is uncomfortable. Daoists say that the fontanel is moving, which too is uncomfortable.

Practical Application

Do not worry about defining these various terms, rather care about what is happening inside. The various terms describe the five inner organs. The five phases exist and manifest in the bodily organs. You should know them, but unfortunately you don't. Nor do you know how to form the embryo, but you want to know. The five organs are always in the process of vaporization and able to move variously, but we do not realize this, either. This kind of explanation of the method already appears in the *Lingbao bifa* and *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. Various masters explain and teach it. Daoist scriptures usually write about results and effects, all other parts depend on oral transmission and learning by heart. Thus, the teacher transmits to the student, and the student gives ideas to the teacher. The result is like the Great One embracing perfect *qi*. Results for both are recorded in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*.

When you are tired or the pain makes you uncomfortable, when you are in a bad mood or have too many things to do, just silently circulate the five phases, then commence the practice. Always calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice: this is a basic requirement. It is not easy to practice, and you may be quite uncomfortable. However, the practice makes you stable and nurtures you. When you are in a good mood, with good physical strength, and you want to see what is moving inside the body, first calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, then silently circulate the five phases, finding a way to let the *qi* move. When you sit in meditation for a long time, first silently circulate the five phases, then calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. When practicing with the mirror, first calm the spirit, then circulate the five phases. If the inner space moves, look in the mirror.

The result of the two training methods are the same, regardless of whether it moves or not. That is, they lead to the opening of the meridians and conduits, successfully moving the inner organs and beginning the *qi* transformation. The movement is for this purpose too. Some people, when they practice rebirth, manage to split the five phases but do not succeed in creating an embryo. The *qi* of the five phases must split open, but you cannot use it to create an embryo for the benefit of the next generation. This is not possible. First you open the *qi* of the five phases, then dismantle and reassemble (install) it. Daoists undertake this with the aim to destroy all transmitted energy. To produce an embryo, you must quit your regular job, but rebirth can be practiced at any time.

The currently fashionable Big Bang theory, widely supported by modern science, is based on data from astronomical observations and research. It is a cosmological model that describes the initial conditions of the universe and its subsequent evolution, but it has not been fully verified. Research has created a dominant point of view or assumption about the past. (According to observations made in 2010, the initial state occurred about 13.3 billion years to 139 million years ago). It describes the initial moments of the universe and outlines how it evolved from a beginning state that was extremely dense with very high temperatures. Through constant expansion, it has formed the world we have today.

At that time all the material in the universe was concentrated into a single point. It was of a high temperature, and a huge explosion occurred. After the Big Bang, material began to swell outward to form the universe we see today. Three seconds after the Big Bang, the ratio of hydrogen to helium was about 3 to 1, while the original helium level in the universe was about 25 percent (not-dark matter) of its total mass. After the Big Bang, hydrogen and nitrogen accounted for more than 99 percent, while all the other elements were less than 0.01 percent. In the current observable universe, the mass of the stars accounts for 98 percent, made mostly of hydrogen and some helium.

New research shows that matter as we know it accounts for less than 4 percent of the total mass of the universe. The remaining 96 percent are composed of dark matter and dark energy: 73 percent dark energy plus 23 percent dark matter. These two thus account for 96 percent; together they determine the destiny of the universe.

As you calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice, the point of light you see does not necessarily have to be white. Its color can change. A black point is good, as black is one of the five colors. Sometimes a little black point has a shiny rim, looking like a solar eclipse. This indicates the human and celestial universe crossing, mixed together (overlapping) at this point. Now consider: How can you pull the black point back? If your intention is serious, human energy will gather in the upper field to be sent out through the Heavenly Eye. Cosmic energy coalesces into one point too and turns back. When the two

points meet, we speak of the intersection of the external Water (Kan) and Fire (Li). Here, human and cosmic energy join. But this is not ideal, because transmitted energy is insufficient.

At this time, transmitted energy converges in the middle. There is a saying about how to peel the sun. If the point of light rotates, the cosmic energy is gathering. Sometimes you see physical and cosmic energy being transformed: if this occurs, do not move. But no matter what, pull it back to the lower field. If yin and yang converge, you can experience the feeling of them transforming (the intersection of Kan and Li) as you deliver it to the lower field.

If you have uterine fibroids, they may grow as you practice the first two steps of women's alchemy, because estrogen levels begin to rise. This is not true for everyone. They may grow to a certain extent, maybe as much as half an inch, when you practice this method. Although they typically grow, if they start out very small, they will most likely shrink. Uterine fibroids are not described in ancient medical books, so there is no specific medication. Also, because it is hard to tell whether they are in the lining of the uterus or on its outside, using medication accurately is hard and only surgery works reliably.

Midnight practice is when Daoists undertake their practices during the vital hours around midnight. You must cultivate at the proper time. After silently circulating the five phases five times, see if there is any change. If the *qi* wants to split, immediately calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice. When you study with a Daoist, the teacher will usually first transmit a high -level subject, then a lesser, until he gets to the basics. From here, he or she will teach increasingly higher methods until you reach the highest level. Then it goes down again and up again, moving back and forth.

Every time you sit in meditation, the practice is different, as are the guided instructions. It is quite easy to use your "feelings" as a guide, but it is hard to guide with the heart-and-mind. At this time, make sure not to make any mistakes and avoid all distractions. A third way is to guide with the help of the life force, a power between the heart-and-mind and the spirit. Actually it is called the form of heart/mind/spirit and the form of life-force/spirit, but these two are not the same.

Practicing in the morning is not as good as practicing in the afternoon. In the morning, you absorb the *qi* of heaven; in the afternoon, heaven absorbs your *qi.* Always strive to get the *qi of* heaven to enter your body, just as you want to utilize the stuff of others. That is, you rob the *qi* of heaven and bring it into your body. In the afternoon you give *qi* to others, always being generous. The morning is called the period of rising yang: we take in yang *qi*; the afternoon is when yang slowly decreases, which means we give it out. The afternoon is detrimental to essential *qi,* which is why we feel pleasant and not painful.

As you meditate, consider: are you influencing others or are you being influenced? Feel their feelings and reactions around you. Feel the movement of *qi*

and the change of *qi* in them. Feel their psychological perceptions and inner awareness (of two kinds). Use your body to sense other people and see if either is wrong, you or they. Where does the pain in your leg start? Be sure to figure it out and solve these problems. Keep breathing and you find that inhaling begins right at exhaling. If you notice someone has pain in your bones, muscles, skin, or inner organs, something inside may urge you to say something. However, do not speak, but just observe and see if it will work itself out on its own.

In ancient times, if someone meditated for an hour, his or her leg would be in pain. For about 45 minutes he could practice properly, but after that he would merely do repentance. During this painful time, the teacher ignores you as long as you remain sitting with your legs crossed. He lets you bear the pain and sit. If you can sit for three hours, for the first two, the teacher will not just let you sit there. He will want you to keep practicing, making you move, especially on the inside: this is called practicing properly. The preliminary portion of the guided instructions focuses on looking inside; the later stage is called proper practice. After your legs start to hurt, the teacher will not worry about you. It hurts if you move; it also hurts if you stay still. Find a way to raise the *qi* and move it around, focusing on the center of the pain. It is important that the sitting bones are in pain (since spirit passes through them). Once they have pain, it will move inside, toward the middle. At this point you can do penetrating practice, giving the pain a pathway to move.

Penetrating practice is a method passed down by Master Wang Chongyang; another is breathing in and focusing the body. Exhale the pain somewhere else, but where?

So far, we have covered four steps: installing the furnace and setting up the cauldron (building the foundation), establishing minor elixir circulation (silently circulating the five phases), calming the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice (one way to open the Heavenly Eye), plus augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact (reverting essence to nourish the brain). Women also learned some steps of women's alchemy. The last three steps can be practiced separately; augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact can appear anywhere in them. You do not know when it appears: not everyone is the same. The elixir scriptures state that the first step may become the fifth, which in turn may change into the seventh: there is no fixed sequence. This is because our bodies have different shapes and structures as well as appearances. When a group practices together, since the pressure of the field is relatively large, we can calm the spirit at the Ancestral Orifice a few more times: this will not cause major problems.

Chapter Fifteen A

Alignment of the Five Phases

According to the theory of the five phases, there are cycles of generating and controlling the five organs in the body. This is known as the alignment of the five phases. It also refers to an ancient method of cultivation and refinement, at the root of Daoist internal cultivation that is recorded in the *Xiuzhen tu*. The immortal Chen Tuan understood the alignment of the five phases through studying the Taiji symbol. In his diagram, there are connecting lines from the kidneys to the bladder, forming both sides of yin and yang. After reaching the bladder, they rotate diagonally, connecting to the liver and the heart. The heart then connects to the stomach and moves on to the lungs, where there is also a rotating diagonal line. All this constitutes a three-dimensional Taiji symbol, which moreover contains two secret orifices, symbolized by the yin-yang fish eyes. Patriarch Chongyang called this minor elixir circulation, also known as the course of the heavenly circuit during the *mao* (5-7 a.m.) and *you* (5-7 p.m.) hours. The controlling cycle of the five phases in the old days was inappropriately known as husband and wife. It really refers to the interaction of metal and wood or the merging of water and fire. It is also called the abundance of water and fire. There are three levels of cultivation and refinement in the alignment of five phases:

1. Use external force to push *qi* to circulate through the five organs.[1]
2. Use internal force to push *qi* to circulate through the five organs.
3. Unite with the power of the natural universe to push *qi* to circulate through the five organs.

The alignment of the five phases comes in two forms: single alignment and alignment of all five phases.

Single Alignment

The organs contain various pathways to nurture life and excrete waste that work individually and are activated in single alignment. It covers the kidneys, liv-

[1] The stem *qi* in this section is entirely organ-based and therefore *qi*. I translate simply "*qi*."

er/gallbladder, heart, stomach, intestines, and lungs. Here is the method to refine them.

Lungs

Stack your hands in front of the lower abdomen (either hand on top), palms facing up. Take a deep breath and let both hands curve, raising them up in front of your mouth. Then, push the palms down along the trachea. Once you reach the left and right bronchial tubes, separate your hands and with both palms begin to fill the left and right lobes, thereby circulating *qi* through them. Pay close attention. The lungs are large; their highest point is the clavicle. They also reach to the back of the body; their lowest point is the abdomen. The lungs were traditionally known as the tree of metal florescence, but it grows inverted, with its roots in the Twelve-storied Tower and its trunk in the bronchial tube. At the same time, while circulating *qi* to transform the lungs, internally observe their shape, size, and color. Use both hands to pull along the lungs. When pulling, pay attention to the feeling in your fingers. When filling the lungs, pay attention to the feeling of lungs. After completing the process, slowly put your hands on your knees, raise your head, and look straight ahead.

Kidneys

People of old used the term "kidneys" to cover the kidneys in the back and the bladder. Raise your head, close your eyes and look straight ahead into the distance, then retrieve spirit light and guide it into the open space of eyes and head, then move it down to the kidneys along the sides of the spine. Raise both hands on the kidneys separately to circulate *qi* to transform them. At the same time, internally observe their size, shape, and color, filling them up with *qi*. From here, push the kidney *qi* into the bladder along the ureter and stack your hands to circulate *qi* to transform it, while at the same time internally observing its size, shape, and color. Next, raise the bladder *qi* into the lower field, then place your hands on your knees, raise your head, and look straight ahead.

Liver and Gallbladder

Stack your hands above the liver area, circulate *qi* to transform the liver while internally observing its size, shape, and color. Squeeze the gallbladder with your hands, then internally observe its size, shape, and color and see if there is any opening in it. Intention and *qi* combine to squeeze the bile, moving it down to the duodenum and from there to the small intestine, colon, transverse colon, descending colon, sigmoid colon, and rectum, to finally discharge from the anus. Put your hands on your knees, raise your head, and look straight ahead. If the alignment of the liver and gallbladder is done well, all kinds of kidneys stones, sand, and other debris will discharge naturally. However, a large stone has to be crushed first before it can be discharged.

Heart

Stack your hands above the heart area, fill the heart with *qi,* then circulate *qi* to transform the heart. Throughout, be soft and gentle. Internally observe its size, shape, and color. Next, raise both hands up along the midline of the body until you reach the Heavenly Rush (Tiantu, CV22) point at the clavicle. Separate your hands, extend your arms, and with intention direct the movement of pulse and blood coming from the heart. See them flow through Heavenly Rush, and from here through the arms and hands to your fingertips. Turn the hands back to Heavenly Rush, stack them, and move them again down the midline to the heart. At the same time, with intention direct the flow back to the heart along the same path, and once more circulate *qi* to transform it. Let both hands move down along the midline to the lower field, separate them, and push along the legs to the feet, as with intention you direct the movement of pulse and blood from hands to toes. Turn the hands away from the toes and move back along the same path, until you reach the lower field. Stack the hands again and move them up to the heart along the midline of the body, as with intention you direct the movement of pulse and blood back to the heart, then circulate *qi* to transform it. To conclude, place your hands on your knees, raise your head, and look straight ahead.

Intestines and Stomach

In ancient times people called the stomach and duodenum simply the stomach. Stack your hands in front of the lower abdomen (either one on top), palms facing up. As you take a deep breath, curve the hands and raise them up to your mouth. From here, let the palms push down facing in, moving along the esophagus all the way to the inlet of stomach. In the classics, this is called Plant's Door. From here, let it enter the stomach, then use the palms to begin repairing the stomach, circulating *qi* to transform it. At the same time, internally observe its size, shape, and color of the stomach. After a little while, let your hands push the *qi* to the exit of the stomach, known as the pyloric exit. From here, as the *qi* moves through the duodenum, let your hands swing down from side to side and envision it moving through the small intestine, large intestine, ascending colon, transverse colon, descending colon, sigmoid colon, rectum, and finally discharge from the anus. To conclude place your hands on your knees, raise your head, and look straight ahead.

Single alignment is specially designed for beginning practitioners of internal cultivation and patients with diseases in one or the other organ. It has the effect of replenishing clarity, expelling turbidity, to transform the organ with *qi.* Practitioners can choose one, two, or all of them according to their purpose. Not all of them should be done every time, but when two or more alignments are chosen for practice, they should be carried out in the order of the generating cycle of the five phases.

The alignment of the kidneys and of the liver and gallbladder can be done together. Whether there is disease, the alignment of the stomach and intestines should be done more often. This is because the alignment of the liver and gallbladder passes three organs and three meridians, that is, those of stomach, small intestine, and large intestine as well as those of stomach, lung, and heart. Because the small intestine meridian connects to the heart, the duodenum meridian connects to the liver and gallbladder, the large intestine meridian connects to the lungs, and the sigmoid colon meridian connects to the kidneys, the stomach forms the center and can support all four directions.

Single alignment is best coordinated with the alignment of all five phases. Practice single alignment first, then move on to all five phases. The practice can be repeated 2, 3, or 6 times. If you are not familiar with the location of the organs in the body, study them well.

Alignment of All Five Phases: Part 1

The first step in the alignment of all five phases follows the theory of their mutual generation, moving *qi* along the path of the generating cycle of the five organs. The cultivation and refinement method is as follows.

Close both eyes and look straight ahead. Slowly and gently retrieve spirit light from the distance and guide it into the open space of eyes and head, then move it down along the reflection line to the kidneys, where you circulate *qi* to transform them. (If use your hands to do so, raise them up, palms facing the kidneys, and begin to push along the five phases.) From here, push kidney *qi* into the bladder along the ureter, and circulate it to transform this organ. Raise bladder *qi* into the liver and gallbladder and circulate it to transform them. Raise liver *qi* into the heart and circulate it to transform this organ. Next, push heart *qi* into the spleen and stomach, and circulate it to transform them. Raise spleen and stomach *qi* and divide it into two to enter the lungs (separating your hands as you push it) and circulate it to transform them. Push lung *qi* along the ribs on both sides to enter the kidneys and circulate it to transform them. Push kidney *qi* into the bladder, after passing through liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. After reaching the bladder, circulate it to transform them. Raise bladder *qi* into the lower field, steady your breathing, place your hands on your knees, raise your head, and look straight ahead.

This is the first method of wisdom and potential used in attracting immortality. There is also another technique that uses external force to strongly push and move the five phases. This works as follows. Steady your breathing and gather *qi* in the lower field. Let both hands overlap above the lower abdomen, palms facing in. Forcefully push the *qi* of the lower field into the bladder, and circulate it transforming this organ. Raise bladder *qi* into the liver and, in turn, circulate it to transform the liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys, then move it back to the bladder. Make sure to separate your hands as you circulate

qi through the lungs and kidneys, and overlap them again when you circulate it through the bladder. In this way, you follow the generating cycle of the five phases. Conclude by raising bladder *qi* back into the lower field.

Explanation

Single alignment and the alignment of all five phases are best practiced while sitting in meditation. The alignment of all five phases can also be practiced with other forms, but always close your eyes during practice. When practicing alignment, intention, eyes, hands, and *qi* must be fully present. Intention being present means that your intention and thinking should have drive and penetrating force. It makes sure that spirit is in front and *qi* behind, and that they all move wherever you think, without fail. From beginning to end, you should have no other thoughts in your mind, no interruption of thinking anywhere, always maintaining smoothness. The eyes being present means that you use your eyes to internally observe the circulation, transformation, and alignment of the *qi* of the five organs. In the beginning, you may not see anything, so just think of the shape and route of the organs. Try to be as meticulous and accurate as you can, seem to be looking even without looking, guiding the *qi* in close accordance with your intention.

The hands being present means that you use the external to guide the internal, letting your hands follow the intention to create movement. Once the intention is ready, your hands are ready, and the internal and external merge. *Qi* being present means that spirit is concentrated and *qi* is tranquil. As your intention moves, so does the *qi,* always following where intention guides. This way the five phases flow by themselves. During the process of circulating *qi,* you can apply various hand techniques: grabbing, pulling, pressing, pushing, raising, turning, pinching, squishing, rubbing, and stroking.

More specifically, grabbing means to use the five fingers to grab the organs, a method used both in Daoist cultivation and for medical treatment. In the old days, grabbing was directed outward, and it had to be done with sufficient force while yet making sure anything grabbed would not be broken. People with pulmonary heart disease should not use the grabbing method.

Pulling and pressing start with both hands facing the organs. As you inhale, pull them out; as you exhale, press them in. When pulling out, think of the *qi* moving in the organs; when pressing in, envision the palms emitting a penetrating substance into the epidermis that enters the organs. Turning it into the *qi,* it prompts the organ *qi* to transform into *qi.* As you pull out, if you feel something, increase force; if you don't feel anything, relax a bit. Apply this from heart to stomach.

Pushing and raising involve both hands moving down and up as you either push or raise the organ using your inner strength. If you push the large intestine, pull and push in turn.

Turning occurs when there is an angled turning point in the course of alignment. Use a circular arc to transition, that is, the rotation should be ingenious, fitting fully with the new alignment. There is no place to miss any area.

Pinching means that the palms are aligned with the inner organ, all ten fingers straight out. As the tips of the fingers move in, you pinch your fingers, and as soon as they are pinched, you release them. Pinch slowly, releasing quickly is key to its skillful application.

Squishing and rubbing refer to hand techniques used when you circulate *qi* to transform the organs. The overall movement is similar to massage. In fact, all these methods are forms of giving a massage to the organs in the open space of the body.

Stroking indicates a circular hand movement around the organ.

When using these various hand techniques, you must be dedicated and focused as well as skillful, gentle, and soft, to ensure the optimal quality of circulating *qi*. The same hand techniques are also effective in treating yourself or others.

Breathing plays an important role in circulating *qi*. It divides into three steps:

1. Without any special requirement, just breathe naturally.

2. To guide internal *qi* up, you inhale; to guide it down, you exhale. To supplement it, you inhale; to discharge it, you exhale. If the mother generates the child [i. e., giving in the five phases sequence], you inhale; if the child wants the mother [i. e., receiving in the sequence], you exhale. Here we need to understand the deep love between mother and child. This "love" refers to the generating cycle of the five phases as it runs automatically in the body. For example, when guiding *qi* in the bladder, you will feel the *qi* active in the bladder; when feeling the contours of the bladder, you should raise its *qi* up into the liver. In this manner, as the mother loves the child, you should inhale. When you circulate *qi,* the bladder and liver feel very comfortable. If your bladder feels pain as you raise its *qi* into the liver, it means that the bladder is not sufficiently circulated or transformed. At this time, send back what you have raised and continue to circulate *qi* to transform the bladder. Only when the liver or the eyes start to move while you work on the bladder, raise bladder *qi* into the liver. This is because you now have a situation where the child wants the mother. Complete raising the *qi* as you exhale. This applies to the other organs as well.

3. Hold the breath between exhalation and inhalation, while silently chanting the appropriate words. To wit, inhale and raise bladder *qi* into the liver. Hold the breath and silently chant:

Eyes unseeing, eastern wood energy,
The heavenly stems *jia* and *yi*, and spirit soul
All return to the liver.

As spirit soul returns to the liver,
It no longer leaks from the eyes.

Exhale and circulate *qi* to transform the liver and gallbladder. Inhale and raise liver *qi* up into the heart. Hold the breath and silently chant:

The tongue soundless, southern fire energy,
The heavenly stems *bing* and *ding*, and spirit
All return to the heart.
As spirit returns to the heart,
It no longer leaks from the mouth.

Exhale and circulate *qi* to transform the heart. Inhale and raise heart *qi* into the spleen and stomach. Hold the breath and silently chant:

The four limbs unmoving, central earth energy,
The heavenly stems *wu* and *ji*, and the intention
All return to the spleen.
As the intention returns to the spleen,
It no longer leaks from the orifices of the four limbs.

Exhale and circulate *qi* to transform the spleen and stomach. Inhale and raise spleen and stomach *qi* into the lungs. Hold the breath and silently chant:

The nose unsmelling, western metal energy,
The heavenly stems *geng* and *xin*, and the material soul
All return to the lungs.
As the material soul returns to the lungs,
It no longer leaks from the nose.

Exhale and circulate *qi* to transform the lungs. Inhale and raise lung *qi* into the kidneys. Hold the breath and silently chant:

The ears unhearing, northern water energy,
The heavenly stems *ren* and *gui*, and essence of the kidneys
All return to the kidneys.
As essence is produced by the kidneys,
It no longer leaks from the ears.

Exhale and circulate *qi* to transform both kidneys. Inhale and raise kidney *qi* into the bladder. Hold the breath and silently recite the same chant as above. Then exhale and circulate *qi* to transform the bladder.

Holding the breath is self-nurturing, it allows the *qi* that circulated to transform the previous organ to nurture and support the *qi* in the current organ, converting its *qi* properties. Hold the breath for as long as possible, but spend about the same amount of time in each of the five organs. The verses of silent recitation can be done longer or with repetition.

Separate your hands, raise the head, and look straight ahead, then project the scenes you see in the organs after circulating *qi* to observe and examine them. This is traditionally known as the method of sending out shapes. See how the shapes you project are different from the anatomical ones and what might be missing.

Stacking the hands is one of way of doing this. It utilizes their strength to push and guide internal *qi,* a technique also known as using the external to guide the internal. When circulating *qi,* make good use internally of the skills of the hands.

After practicing the alignment of all five phases, sometimes the organs start to be spontaneously active. If that happens, let the movement be gentle, not too fast or too vigorous, lest it damages the organs. When it begins spontaneously, always imagine shifting the external into the internal, so that the internal movement starts to involve the life force. The reason for this is that "prolonged activity can lead to the discharge of essence and *qi* filling up the meridians. Overly engaged meridians will hurt spirit" (i.e., meridians out of control are overly engaged and this will hurt spirit).

If you have coronary or another heart condition, you may not be able to breathe well during the practice. In that case, breathe through the mouth, panting on exhalation as you move your tongue and fingers. This will provide relief.

When the sacrum, Meeting Yin, or front genitalia start to pulse, immediately clasp your hands together, push your shoulders forward, lower your head, and take a deep breath. At the same time, if possible, complete a heavenly circuit. In the old days, this action was called flying the gold crystal from behind the elbows. The purpose of lowering the head is to find the *ziwu* line in the body to facilitate the heavenly circuit.

When you feel nauseous during the circulation of all five phases, it is because you are using the wrong hand technique. Working with the hands must not be too fast, especially squeezing the gallbladder must be done very slowly and the heart cannot be pinched.

If the circulation of the five phases is not done well, there is no energy in the body. Women may cry when practicing the heavenly circuit, because their liver *qi* is deficient; others may experience nose pain because the *qi* of their lungs is overly full. If you shed tears as the liver opens its orifices, flutter your tongue, and the tears will naturally ease. If you experience a runny nose or nosebleeds, your lungs have opened it orifices, but there is no reason to worry. If you hear humming in your ears, steady the kidneys.

If the seven orifices are not sealed, the Heavenly Gate will not open. If the Heavenly Gate does not open, there will be no light in the Heavenly Eye. As long as the points are open, you cannot see anything. Once you bring the eyes together, you can see things. If the circulation of the five phases is not done well, the Heavenly Gate cannot open. Why is it that the points will open when the circulation of the five phases is not complete, but the eyes are closed? It is because the seven orifices are interconnected. When practicing the silent circulation of the five phases, they get active along with it, all seven being linked to each other. Once they are active jointly, as long as the five phases are full and the circuit is closed, activate the Heavenly Gate again and the energy will pass through.

Most people cry during practice because their front genital area is not closed. The wider the area is open, the louder they cry. Use the palms to spread and release substances, to circulate *qi* and transform it in the body. This is traditionally called "returning to the original position while circulating *qi* to transform the universe." Turn all the organs into a microcosm, and the body into a macrocosm.

There are two acupuncture points in the kneecaps, traditionally called Tiger Eyes. Pull your hands off of the Tiger Eyes to release wind. Make sure to understand the relationship between them and the organs. To treat rheumatism, pull more on the Tiger Eyes. Ideally you also do it during the last stage of sitting meditation.

Alignment of All Five Phases: Part 2

After stabilizing body and mind using the methods of attracting immortality, activate the lower field matching your natural breathing, allowing the breathing to move with the lower field. At this moment, a space is formed in the lower field. Your intention should be focused there, both eyes turning inward. Breathe naturally and relax your entire body.

Inhale and gently focus the *qi* in the lower field, slowly centering it in the lower abdomen. Exhale and let the lower field release it gently outward, slowly letting it go from the lower abdomen. Inhale and slowly focus it in the lower abdomen, little by little centering it there to receive it slowly in the lower field. Exhale and let the lower abdomen release it outward, letting it go from the lower field. Inhale and slowly add force as you focus it in the lower abdomen and the lower field. Exhale and let it slowly release from the lower abdomen and the lower field, the longer the release the better.

Inhale and intensify the intention. Exhale and place the intention in the lower field and abdomen, turn your vision inward, and look down at the lower field. Inhale and focus it in the lower field; exhale and release it from the lower field. Inhale and focus the lower abdomen; exhale and let the lower abdomen release. Inhale and focus it in the lower field; exhale and let it release from the

lower field. Inhale and focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale and let it release from the lower abdomen.

After practicing several times, inhale and push the *qi* of the lower field into the bladder. After it reaches the bladder, relax your entire body. Inhale and focus it in the bladder while raising the front genitalia; exhale and release it from the bladder while slowing down the speed of breathing. Inhale and focus it slowly in the bladder; exhale and release it slowly from the bladder.

Now increase the intention, placing it firmly in the bladder as you turn your vision inward to the bladder. After practicing several times, take a deep breath and guide bladder *qi* into the liver. Once it reaches the liver, relax your body. Inhale and focus it in the liver; exhale and release it from the liver. Inhale and slowly focus it in the liver; exhale and slowly release it from the liver. Increase your intention, placing it firmly in the liver as you turn your vision inward to the liver. After practicing several times, take a deep breath and guide the *qi* of the liver into the heart. Once it reaches the heart, relax your body.

Inhale and focus it in the heart; exhale and let it release from the heart. Inhale and slowly focus it in in the heart; exhale and slowly let it release from the heart. Increase the intention, placing it firmly in the heart as you turn your vision inward to the heart. After practicing several times, inhale and slowly focus in the heart. Exhale and push the *qi* of the heart into the spleen and stomach. Once it reaches the spleen and stomach, relax your body.

Inhale and focus it in the spleen and stomach; exhale and let it release from the spleen and stomach. Inhale and focus it slowly in the spleen and stomach; exhale and slowly let it release from the spleen and stomach. Increase the intention, placing it firmly in the spleen and stomach as you turn your vision inward to the spleen and stomach. After practicing several times, take a deep breath, raise the *qi* of the spleen and stomach into the lungs. Once it reaches the lungs, relax your body. Inhale and focus it in the lungs; exhale and let it release from the lungs. Inhale and slowly focus it more deeply in the lungs; exhale and slowly let it release from the lungs as you turn your vision inward to the lungs.

After practicing several times, inhale and focus it in the lungs; exhale and push the *qi* of the lungs into the kidneys. Once it reaches the kidneys, relax your body and bring your intention to the kidneys. Inhale and focus it in the kidneys; exhale and let it release from the kidneys.

Inhale and slowly focus it more deeply in the kidneys; exhale and slowly let it release from the kidneys as you turn your vision inward to the kidneys. After practicing several times, inhale and focus it in the kidneys; exhale and push the *qi* of the kidneys into the bladder. Once it reaches the bladder, relax your body. Inhale and focus it in the bladder, raising the front genitalia and perineum; exhale and let it release from the bladder. Inhale and slowly focus more deeply in the bladder; exhale and let it slowly release from the bladder as

you turn your vision inward toward the bladder. From here, move on to the next cycle of the five phases.

After you have completed the last circulation by reaching the bladder, take a deep breath, raise the bladder *qi* into the lower field, and focus it in the lower abdomen as you turn your vision inward; exhale and release it from the lower abdomen. Inhale and focus it in the lower field and lower abdomen; exhale and let it release from the lower field and lower abdomen. Inhale and focus it in the lower abdomen slowly, focus it slowly in the lower field, raise the perineum, exhale and slowly let it release from the lower abdomen and the lower field. Inhale and slowly focus it in the lower abdomen and the lower field; exhale and let it release slowly from here. At this time, hold the breath and use internal *qi* to push into the lower field to see if the lower field moves. Slowly return to natural breathing.

Alignment of All Five Phases: Part 3

After spirit enters the *qi,* hold your intention in the lower field. Sit in meditation for a while, then intensify the intention and use a strong intention to activate the lower abdomen. Inhale and focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale and let it release. Inhale and focus it in the lower abdomen, then push the *qi* of spirit light in the lower field into the bladder. Once it reaches there, exhale and relax, keeping your intention in the bladder. Inhale and focus it in the bladder; exhale and let it release. After doing this a few times, take a deep breath, raise the *qi* of spirit light up to the liver. Once it reaches there, exhale and relax. Inhale and focus it in the liver; exhale and let it release from the liver. After circulating *qi* to transform it, take a deep breath, guide the *qi* of spirit light to the heart. Once it gets there, exhale and relax.

Inhale and focus it in the heart; exhale and let it release from the heart. After circulating *qi* to transform it, again inhale and focus it in the heart; exhale and push the *qi* of spirit light into the stomach, making it expand. Exhale and relax. Inhale and focus it in the stomach and spleen; exhale and let it release from there, activating the stomach and spleen. After that, take a deep breath and raise the *qi* of spirit light up to the lungs. Inhale and raise it to the lungs; exhale and relax. Inhale and focus it in the lungs and in both sides of the chest; exhale and let it release from there. After circulating *qi* to transform it, inhale and focus it in the lungs; then exhale and push the *qi* of spirit light into the kidneys. Once it gets there, relax. Inhale and focus it in the kidneys; exhale and let it release. After circulating *qi* to transform them, inhale and focus it in the kidneys; then exhale and push the *qi* of spirit light into the bladder, allowing it to grow bigger as the front genital area moves forward. Inhale and focus it in the bladder, slightly raising the front genitalia; exhale and let it release from the bladder.

After circulating *qi* to transform it, take a deep breath and guide the *qi* of spirit light back up to the liver. Once it reaches there, relax. Complete the entire cycle a second time and practice the silent circulation of the five phases all the way back to the bladder. After several times, inhale and raise the *qi* of spirit light up to the lower field, strongly focusing it in the lower abdomen. Let the *qi* of the five phases enter the lower field. Exhale and release it from the lower abdomen, which is now quite powerful. At this time, inhale and focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale and let it release from there. This is the first round of refinement, which establishes minor elixir circulation.

After practicing several times, slowly let the breathing become soft and weak, at the same time also relaxing the strength of the lower abdomen. Inhale and slowly focus it in the lower abdomen; exhale and slowly let it release it from there. Once your breathing is soft and weak, add breathing through the pores. Inhale and focus it in the body, slowly focusing it in the lower abdomen; exhale and let it release from the body, letting it go from the lower abdomen.

Parts two and three of the silent circulation of the five phases are very similar, but the level practice is not the same. Pay close attention to the following:

1. In the process of the silent circulation of the five phases, by all means apply strong intention to guide the internal with the internal, rather than guiding it with the external.

2. After arriving at each organ, inhale and focus the *qi* in the organ, exhale and let it release from the organ. This is like doing organ exercises: you really make the organ move, expand or contract.

3. In the process of moving from one organ to the next, keep your breathing long and your movements slow. At the same time, pay attention to the exact manner of moving from one organ to the next: in some cases you inhale; in others, you exhale. Make sure not to reverse the process. Relax your body as soon as you reach the next organ.

4. As you breathe with each organ, that is, expand and contract it, internally observe whether the organ has been transformed and see what shape and color it is.

5. This version of the silent circulation of the five phases is fundamentally different from that discussed in the first step. There, the *qi* came first and spirit second: this reflects the gathering of ingredients. Here, spirit comes first and the *qi* second, so you should pay attention to the word "lead," which refers to the concoction and refinement of the elixir.

6. In this process, yin and yang *qi* combine with the five phases to move to the furnace. It is the first round of elixir concoction, called minor elixir circulation. As you practice over a prolonged period, the five phases will circulate by themselves. At this point, you will understand what it means that mother and child love each other, and father and child meet each other.

The Five Phases in the Body

We use different modes of thought and various levels of examination to study the circulation in living people, working with different theories regarding the operational laws of the organs: this is called working to envision the organs. The scope of research covers all organs, tissues, and functions both within and outside the body. The Daoists' understanding of the physiological functions of the organs is not limited to the level of anatomy. For thousands of years, they have worked with the theory of the unity of heaven and humanity as well as undertaken prolonged periods of personal practice. Observing living people and examining their own personal experiences, they have developed entire sets of theories and principles. In this manner, they have verified and applied the theory of yin and yang and the five phases. Therefore, even though the theory behind envisioning the organs may look similar to modern anatomy and physiology, it is ultimately the product of a different way of thinking. It reflects the research of people using different methods and modes of thought, so that the Daoist and the modern scientific modes can be said to supplement and complement each other while also functioning in a parallel manner.

The Five Organs

The five organs are the liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. Their main function is to store essence and *qi* and if they do so without any leakage, we say that "they are full but not replete."

Heart

The heart is the master of human destiny and occupies the chief position among the organs. Under normal conditions, the five organs and six viscera under the guidance of the heart carry out unified and coordinated physiological activities, so that people can be full of energy and have good health. If the heart develops a lesion, it may cause disruptions in the activities of the other organs, possibly leading to mental disorders and even life-threatening conditions.

The heart governs the blood and blood vessels, its outward manifestation is on the body surface. Blood has the function of nurturing, but it must rely on the activities of the heart and the blood vessels to run through the entire body and nurture it.

The arising and decline, emptiness and fullness of the heart, blood, and blood vessels are reflected in the changes of people's complexion. Those with a healthy heart look rosy and have a lustrous complexion. They also possess spirit. In contrast, [when the heart is weak] the complexion is pale and gray. The lesser yang meridian of the hand is the heart meridian, and any *qi* deficiency here causes failure of the heart, which may result in obstruction in blood flow and blood coagulation. The blood when healthy is red; when it congeals, it

turns black. Blood is supposed to nurture the entire body, but if it coagulates and does not flow well, it loses this nurturing ability. Thus, very old people not only have a complexion as black as lacquer, but are stiff like withered wood. If you see a complexion of this kind, you know that the blood is obstructed and there is a loss of its nurturing effect.

Liver

The liver's nature is to be outgoing and active. If its *qi* is too outgoing, it will make people get angry easily. On the other hand, if it is deficient and the liver loses its firmness and vigor, people will be afraid and cowardly.

The liver stores the blood and can adjust the blood flow according to the body's activity. If it is ill and loses its power to store blood, people will lie awake and be restless.

The liver governs the tendons, its outward manifestation is the nails. The function of the tendons is to move, but their nurturing derives from the liver. The liver disperses its essence to nurture the tendons, and when the tendons obtain its support, they can move powerfully. Any deficiency in the liver and tendons is often reflected in the nails. Those who have strong tendons also have strong and thick nails. Those who have weak tendons usually have thin and soft nails. A person with liver disease often has brittle, dry, lackluster, or deformed nails.

Spleen

The stomach governs digestion, while the spleen serves to absorb and infuse fluid to nurture the entire body. Thus, the spleen is the "root of postnatal existence." Its function is to help the stomach to digest food and disperse body fluids.

The spleen governs the muscles, and its outward manifestation is the lips. If a person is well nurtured, he stores fat and develops a healthy chubbiness. If the spleen is ill, it causes digestive and absorption disorders as well as muscle loss, so that people gradually lose weight. This will be reflected on the lips and a rather yellowish complexion.

The spleen governs the four limbs. They receive nourishment from stomach *qi,* which allows them to perform outward actions. However, stomach *qi* cannot flow directly into the four limbs, so that they must rely on the circulation of *qi* in the spleen. Only from here can they obtain their nourishment of stomach *qi*. If the spleen is ill, the body cannot discharge liquids, the four limbs will not receive proper nourishment, the meridian paths are harmed, and the yang *qi* of the four limbs will increasingly weaken, causing difficulty in movement.

The spleen manages the blood. The blood originates from the essence and *qi* of water and grain and is generated by the middle burner connected to spleen and stomach. Thus, the spleen has the function of managing the blood. If this

is abnormal, it will lead to various kinds of bleeding diseases, which should be treated by methods of "drawing blood to the spleen" or "nurturing the spleen to absorb blood." This will provide good medical treatment.

Lungs

The lungs are the root of *qi*. They govern the *qi* of the entire body. *Qi* is the prime source of energy in human life, which includes essence and *qi* obtained by drinking water and eating grain as well as the natural *qi* we receive by breathing in.

Natural *qi* is also known as the *qi* of the five colors. These five enter through the nose and are transformed into *qi,* duly stored in the heart and lungs. As *qi* rises, it can make the face bright and glowing and the sound of the voice resonant and clear. There are five flavors in the essence and *qi* of water and grain, which are stored in the stomach and intestines. After digestion and absorption, the essence of these five flavors are injected into the five organs to nurture their *qi*. It harmoniously preserves the biochemical functions of the body.

As the fluids generate each other, spirit arises. Natural *qi* enters the body through the lungs, and in the center of the chest combines with grain *qi* to form ancestral *qi*. Ancestral *qi* emerges from the throat through the process of breathing, then moves through the heart meridian and spreads into the entire body. This is the reason why the lungs are the governor of the body's *qi*.

Just as the heart governs the blood, so the lungs govern the *qi*. However, only when *qi* in the lungs is comfortable and open can the heart function normally. There is, therefore, a close mutual relationship between the *qi* of the lungs and the blood of the heart.

The lungs govern skin and body hair. They work through inhalation and exhalation, serving as the body's primary organ in charge of the exchange of *qi* coming in and out of the body. In addition, the pores of the skin also have the function of dispersing *qi*. Skin and body hair depend on the *qi* from the lungs to get warm and moist; without it, they will be withered and haggard. "The lungs match the skin; their manifestation is the body hair." If the lungs are ill, this is reflected in the skin and body hair; vice versa, if skin and body hair are affected by wayward *qi,* this can cause ailments in the lungs.

Kidneys

The kidneys store essence, which is their primary function. Essence here refers to the essence of all five organs and six viscera as well as to the basic reproductive potency in men and women.

The kidneys generate and govern the bones. Their outward manifestation is the head hair. They generate marrow, which fills the bones; the bones rely on marrow to be full and strong. If the bones are not continuously renewed, marrow cannot be full and the bones will be cold. The hair on the head is the ex-

ternal manifestation of the kidneys, its nutrition originates in the blood, and blood in turn is the essence of marrow. Therefore, if kidney essence is depleted, the bones will dry up and the hair on the head will be dull. If essence and marrow are sufficient, on the other hand, they will be healthy and radiant.

The kidneys govern water. Water enters the stomach and from the spleen, earth vaporizes into the lungs. When the *qi* of the lungs moves down, it goes to the kidneys as waste water (urine). Water can be clear or turbid, and within each of these qualities, it can be clear and turbid yet again. Typically the clear rises up while the turbid descends. The clear, therefore, rises up into the lungs and turns into *qi*. The clear part within this moves from the lungs into the skin and body hair, while its turbid part descends from the three burners to reach the kidneys. The turbid within the turbid, moreover, is excreted from the bladder, while the clear within it is stored in the kidneys. All fluid in the kidneys then transforms into *qi* and ascends to the lungs. From here it changes into water and moves again to the kidneys. "The earth *qi* belongs to the kidneys and produces water and fluid" (*Suwen* chapter on "Water Heating Points").

The five organs of the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys are closely interdependent and mutually restricted in their physiological functions. The heart belongs to the phase fire; it is the organ of yang within yang. The kidneys belong to the phase water; they are the organ of yin within yang. When the heart and kidneys interact smoothly, water and fire are abundant, and you can maintain the normal physiological activities of the body. Similarly, the lungs govern the *qi* while the heart governs the blood. When *qi* and blood work together closely, the body's circulation moves smoothly without interruption. Then again, the kidneys are the root of prenatal existence; they store the essence and *qi* of the five organs. The spleen is the root of postnatal existence; it transfers the essence and *qi* of water and grain to nurture the five organs. To sum up, the continued activation of human destiny depends on the close cooperation of the prenatal and the postnatal.

The Six Viscera

The main function of the six viscera is to receive and digest water and grain, as well as to absorb and transfer body fluids and discharge all waste and residue. The six viscera take in substances but do not store them, they stay in a state of "replete but not full."

Gallbladder

The gallbladder serves to store bile; it is the "residence of central essence." Its nature is to be strong and straight, but it can be broken. If the gallbladder is subject to wayward *qi,* there will be mental restlessness and indecision. When bile is abundant, there will be disease in the mouth. If bile reverses direction and flows into the stomach, its fluid will leak into the mouth causing a bitter taste. If stomach *qi* reverses, too, you will vomit.

Stomach

The stomach serves to take in, digest, and absorb water and grain. It is the root of *qi* and blood in the body, therefore, it is also called the Ocean of *Qi* and Blood. If you have a stomach ailment and your digestive function is abnormal, it is hard for your body to nurture the five organs and six viscera, four limbs and hundred bones. Therefore, "without water and grain people die, their meridians not having stomach *qi,* they also die."

Small Intestine

The small intestine functions to receive grain and water as processed in the stomach, then it separates the clear from the turbid. Anything clear turns into essence and body fluids; anything turbid becomes waste. Clear substances are absorbed and spread to the different body parts, ending up by seeping into the bladder. Turbid materials sink down to the large intestine. If the small intestine is sick, the clear and the turbid do not separate but all move down, resulting in unfavorable absorption and malnutrition.

Large Intestine

The large intestine has the function of transferring waste and absorbing moisture. It receives the waste processed by the small intestine and absorbs its moist parts, causing it to take solid shape (as feces), as which it is then released via the anus. If the large intestine ails, there will be rumbling in the viscera and pain in the abdomen as well as loose stools. Quite possibly, the large intestine will be dry, causing constipation. If both the stomach and the large intestine are diseased, symptoms vary. When the stomach feels cold and the abdomen is distended, the intestine will tremble, producing sounds and leaks. When the stomach feels cold and the intestine is hot, the abdomen will be distended and leaky. When the stomach feels hot and the intestine is cold, the lower abdomen will be distended.

Bladder

The bladder serves to eliminate urine and store body fluids, thus it is the "repository of body fluids." If there is an abundanc, fluids enter the bladder and become urine. If there is lack, urination is harmful. Conversely, if you urinate too much, this can cause a loss of fluids. Therefore, urine and body fluids often influence each other.

Three Burners

The three burners are the upper, middle, and lower burner. The upper burner starts at the top of the stomach and reaches the mouth, passing through the narrow divider and spreading through the chest. It takes in food but does not move it out; it receives water and grain *qi* as processed in the stomach,

moistening and nourishing the flesh by warming and supporting muscles, joints, and skin.

The middle burner starts in the center of the stomach and receives the waste of grain *qi,* turning its essence and subtle parts into blood in order to give life to the body. It ferments and heats water and grain; it vaporizes the body fluids; it receives the essence and *qi* of water and grain, turning them into nutritive energy.

The lower burner starts at the lower opening of the stomach and reaches into the bladder. It separates the clear from the turbid, drains waste, and through its *qi* regulates the lower functions. As a result, the three burners serve as passage ways connecting to transporting fluids and govern all different kinds of *qi.*

The key to maintaining the physiological function of the three burners is to focus on the Gate of Destiny in the lower burner. They all receive primordial *qi* here and distribute it through the entire body, thereby sustaining the normal physiological functions of the organs.

Although the functions of the six viscera of gallbladder, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, bladder, and the three burners are different, they all transform water and grain and circulate body fluids. Controlling the digestion and absorption of foodstuffs, transporting and spreading the body fluids, and managing the disposal of body waste requires a precise division of labor and close cooperation among them.

Extraordinary Mansions

Brain

The brain is located in the skull, reaching up to the heavenly canopy (at the top of the head) and down to the Wind Mansion (Fengfu; GV16) point at the back of the neck and near the beginning of the spinal cord. The brain not only connects directly to the medullary foramen of the spine, but also has a close relationship with the bone marrow. All marrow belongs to the brain, which is why it is also called the Ocean of Marrow. The brain controls the limbs and the body's flexibility, the intelligence of the ears and eyes, as well as all normal thinking activities. If brain marrow is replete, the body is light and full of strength, capable of doing heavy work. If brain tissue is deficient, there can be dizziness, tinnitus, blindness, and overall lethargy. The kidneys closely relate to the brain, because they are the main reservoir of essence and generates both bone and marrow, which match brain matter.

Marrow

Marrow is generated in the kidneys and stored in the bones. It provides nutrition to the bones, fills their hollows, and relates to the brain.

Bones

The bones form the body's scaffold, continuously nurtured by marrow to maintain their firm and strong nature. The bones can store marrow, but cannot bring it forth, since all marrow production depends on the kidneys. If the kidneys do not bring it forth, marrow will be deficient and the bones are not strong.

Blood Vessels

The blood vessels (veins and arteries) closely connect to the heart. The heart governs all blood vessels, which closely depend on it. The two are interrelated and function in mutual cooperation. The blood vessels are the residence of blood, using *qi* as its root. The blood vessels gather to transport *qi* and blood, but they also restrain it, so that *qi* and blood can circulate properly. They spread all over the body, carrying *qi* and blood as well as delivering the essence of foodstuffs to nurture the entire body. "Food *qi* enters the stomach, unites with turbid *qi,* then enters the blood vessels as yin essence." The blood vessel's *qi* flows into the meridians, then returns to the lungs.

Organs and Viscera Combined

The organs mainly store essence, while the viscera transform materials. The five organs are yin, while the six viscera are yang. Yang governs the outside, while yin governs the inside. Matched one on one, yin to yang, outside to inside, they cooperate with each other and form a functional unit: thus we speak of organs and viscera combined. The relationship between the two works through the meridians. The meridians of the organs run through the viscera, and those of the viscera run through the organs. For this reason, the function of organs and viscera is different, but they are interrelated and depend on each other. The *Huangdi neijing lingshu* states:

> The lungs combine with the large intestine, which is the mansion of transportation. The heart combines with the small intestine which is the mansion of abundance. The liver combines with the gallbladder, which is the mansion of central essence. The spleen combines with the stomach, which is the mansion of the five grains. The kidneys combine with the bladder, which is the mansion of the body fluids. (ch. 2, "Basics of Transportation")

The Nine Orifices

The eyes, mouth, ears, nose, and tongue are known as the five sense organs and also called the seven orifices. If joined by the front genitalia and perineum, we speak of nine orifices. Although the organs and viscera rest inside the body, they closely relate to the five sense organs and nine orifices.

Ears

The ears and the kidneys: The kidneys mainly store essence, which produces marrow, and marrow connects to the brain. If marrow is abundant in the brain, the ears will be sharp; if marrow is deficient in the brain, the ears will have tinnitus and tend to be deaf. Kidney-*qi* flows through the ears: if it is abundant in the kidneys, the ears can hear the five sounds.

The ears and the heart: The heart governs blood and blood vessels. For hearing to be normal, *qi* and blood supply must be abundant. If blood is deficient in the vessels and is unable to function properly, there may be tinnitus and hearing disorders.

The ears and the liver and gallbladder: The liver and gallbladder govern the growth of hair. If there is not enough *qi,* the upper section of the body will be deficient causing tinnitus and deafness. If there is too much *qi,* on the other hand, the upper part is in excess, which can also cause tinnitus.

Eyes

The eyes and the liver: The eyes are the opening of the liver. The liver governs the storage of blood and the growth of hair. If liver blood is deficient, the eyes cannot see; if it is in excess, there will be red canthus sores in the eyes. If liver *qi* is abundant, you can distinguish the five colors.

The eyes and the heart: The heart governs the blood and blood vessels, and the eyes must be supported by its *qi* and blood to see.

The eyes and the organs and viscera: The essence and *qi* of the five organs and six viscera are transported through the blood and blood vessels, and thereby flow into both eyes. Thus they become the essence of the eyes. The nest of essence is the eyes; it serves as the shield of their essence. The eyes divide into left and right: the left is yang and the right is yin; the left matches the viscera and the right matches the organs. Each eye consists of pupil, iris, sclera, eyelid, canthus, and many other parts. For the correspondence between the eyes and the organs and viscera see the table below:

	Left Eye - Viscera	Right Eye - Organs
Pupil	Bladder	Kidneys
Iris	Gallbladder	Liver
Eyelid	Stomach	Spleen
Canthus	Small Intestine	Heart
Sclera	Large Intestine	Lungs

Nose

The nose and the lungs: The nose is the passageway for breathing. The lungs govern breathing, so the nose is the lungs orifice of brightness. The nose can distinguish different smells, but lung *qi* and breath are needed for the sense

of smell to be normal. "If lung *qi* is deficient, the nose is blocked and cannot function."

Mouth

The mouth and the spleen: The spleen governs digestion, and if it is healthy, you get hungry and need to eat. "Spleen *qi* passes through the mouth: if the spleen is in harmony, the mouth can distinguish the five grains." The mouth is the spleen's orifice of brightness. The yang brightness meridian of the foot is the stomach meridian: it also runs around the lips.

Tongue

The tongue and the heart: The tongue governs the sense of taste, which is governed by heart *qi*. "Heart *qi* passes through the tongue: if the heart is in harmony, the tongue can distinguish the five flavors." If heart *qi* does not function properly, you often eat without knowing the taste of the food: the tongue is the heart's orifice of brightness.

The heart and the small intestine match each other inside and out. Therefore, if there is heat in the small intestine, the tongue will be red or sore.

Front Genitalia

The front genitalia and the kidneys: If the pulse of the kidney meridian is slippery, this typically indicates a condition of kidney heat, leading to retention of urine, lack of smoothness during urination, swollen and painful testicles, as well as impotence.

The front genitalia and the liver: The liver meridian runs through the external genitalia. If the *qi* flow of the terminal yin meridian of the foot is disrupted, testicular shrinkage occurs. The front genitalia is also the place where the tendons gather, so impotence closely relates to the liver.

The front genitalia and other organs and viscera: If the pulse of the spleen meridian is slightly hard and slippery, the spleen has a condition of warm heat. When warm heat fills up the front genitalia, it can cause hernias and rashes.

The front genitalia relate to the kidneys, bladder, spleen, stomach, liver, as well as the Conception and Governing Vessels.

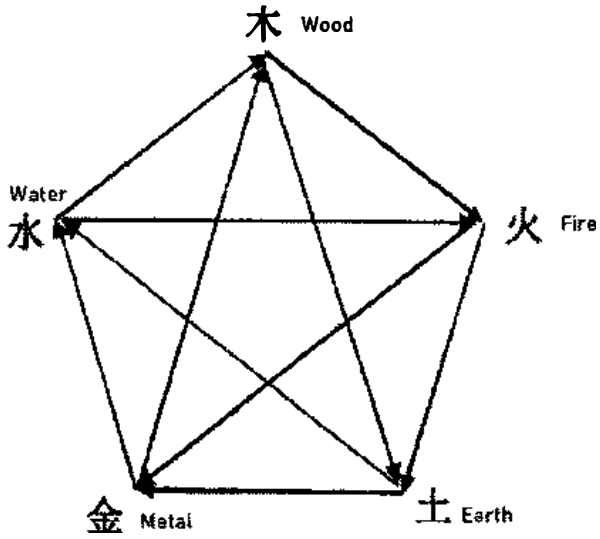
Rear Genitals

The rear genitals relate to all the organs except the stomach, and most importantly the kidneys and the lungs. If the kidney meridian is slightly off, the circulation of blood and *qi* does not function properly, causing amenorrhea, rectal prolapse, hemorrhoids, and other conditions.

The lungs and the large intestine match each other inside and out. The anus is the lower end of the large intestine. Therefore, patients with lung fever often have diseases such as colonic obstruction and anal hemorrhoids.

The nine orifices closely connect to the five organs, six viscera, and twelve meridians. The purpose of the classification of the five organs is to link each opening with one organ as well as identify and differentiate various symptoms as they relate to each organ.

The Structure of the Five Phases



In this chart, the external lines indicate the generating cycle, while the internal lines show the controlling cycle of the five phases. In practice, start with the generating cycle, then move on to the controlling cycle. The mother gives birth to the child and provides support, and the child steals the essence of the mother. In the controlling cycle, the controller is the husband and the controlled is the wife. They both steal each other's essence.

1. Generating and Controlling Cycles

(Wood) The liver is the husband of the spleen, the mother of the heart, the child of the lungs, and the child of the kidneys.

(Fire) The heart is the husband of the lungs, the mother of the spleen, the wife of the kidneys, and the child of the liver.

(Earth) The spleen is the husband of the kidneys, the mother of the lungs, the wife of the liver, and the child of the heart.

(Metal) The lungs are the husband of the liver, the mother of the kidneys, the wife of the heart, and the child of the spleen.

(Water) The kidneys are the husband of the heart, the mother of the liver, the wife of the spleen, and the child of the lungs.

The liver manifests in the tendons within the body and in the fingernails on the outside, using the eyes as its portal. It is under the control of the lungs and exerts stimulation over the spleen. If the kidneys are abundance, the heart will be diminished (as seen in the fingernails).

The heart manifests in the blood vessels within the body and in the complexion on the outside, using the tongue as its portal. It is under the control of the kidneys and exerts stimulation over the lungs. If the liver is abundant, the spleen will be diminished (the complexion is not a clear, stable color, but tends to shift).

The spleen manifests in storage within the body, nurturing the heart, liver, lungs, and kidneys; it manifests in the flesh on the outside and uses the lips and mouth as its portal, determining the rhythm of breathing. It is under the control of the liver and exerts stimulation over the kidneys. If the heart is abundant, the lungs will be diminished.

The lungs manifest as the skin within the body and as body hair on the outside, using the nose as their portal. They are under the control of the heart and exert stimulation over the liver. If the spleen is abundant, the kidneys will be diminished.

The kidneys manifest in the bones within the body and in head hair on the outside, using the ears as their portal. They are under the control of the spleen and exert stimulation over the heart. If the lungs are abundant, the liver will be diminished.

2. Correspondences of the Orifices

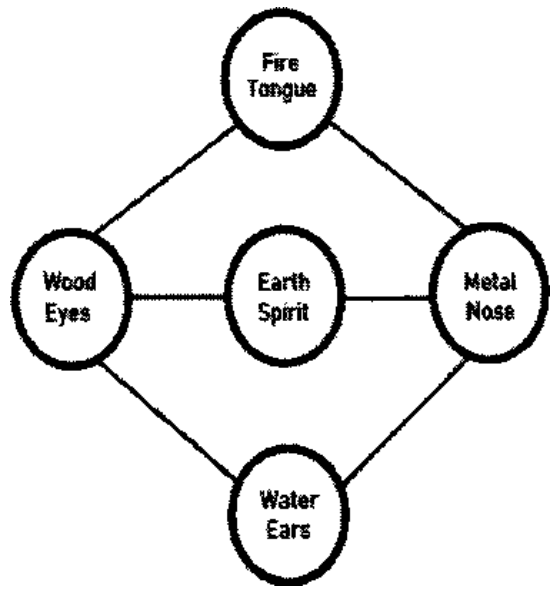
The opening from the liver to the outside is the eyes; the fluid that comes out is tears.

The opening form the heart to the outside is the tongue; the fluid that comes out is sweat.

The opening from the spleen to the outside is the mouth; the fluid that comes out is saliva.

The opening form the lungs to the outside is the nose; the fluid that comes out is mucus.

The opening from the kidneys to the outside is the ears; the fluid that comes out is spit.



3. Correspondences with the Inner Organs

The orifices and the inner organs work together in a close relationship, influenced and restricted by the generating and controlling cycles of the five phases as shown in the figure above.

Being closely related, they can transform from one into another. If the eyelids are twitching uncomfortably and you want to stop the pulsation (or movement) of the eyes, don't just work on your eyes and liver but begin by moving your tongue, then inhale and swallow the *qi* into your small intestine so that it gets activated. At the same time, use your ears (by listening internally) so

the kidneys will generate water. This kidney water in turn generates *qi,* which enters the liver and causes your eyelids to stop twitching.

The different forms of *qi* in the five organs are symbolized by the heraldic animals: green dragon, white tiger, vermilion bird, and Dark Warrior. Once you understand the five phases and four heraldic animals, you can properly distinguish yin and yang and discern the art of turning them upside down. Using the methods of the seven treasures and the perfect *qi* of the nine heavens, you can circulate and guide the *qi* through the organs and viscera, causing the eight trigrams to move internally.

Once you reach a high level of proficiency in circulating the five phases, you can turn the essence of the five organs and six viscera into *qi* and begin the internal process of transformation, which will manifest in a series of outside phenomena.

After the five organs are completely filled with *qi,* you may notice that they start to move spontaneously. At this time, use both hands to follow along the routes of the meridians, focusing on their major acupuncture points. As you reach a point, you can eject the *qi* with a hard exhalation and even on occasion apply one or the other of the Six Healing Sounds. In fact, this is the origin of the practice of the Six Healing Sounds.

Next, congeal the *qi* into fluid and circulate it around to form an elixir: we call this elixir circulation. "Gone out and returned to its original place: this is called elixir circulation. It is not rinsing, gargling, or swallowing saliva." There are several routes here.

The key routes are those of the paired meridians to the left and right of the spine. Matching the five phases, they are those of the liver, lungs, heart, kidneys, and spleen. The liver resides in the direction of the east, its heavenly stems are *jia* and *yi*, and its phase is wood. Its *qi* is known as the green dragon. This emerges through the lungs, then presses up along the left side of the spine to flow into the eyes where it turns into tears: it is known as perfect water. Using another path, excess *qi* of the liver flows into the upper palate and out of the left side: this is called the golden fluid. A yet different way for it to travel is up along the right side of the spine to flow into the nose where it turns into mucus: this is traditionally known as perfect gold. Excess *qi* of the lungs flows up into the right side of the upper palate: this is called elixir circulation, also known as one form of elixir circulation or one form circulating into another.

The following table shows some commonly used correspondences of the five phases:

Five Phases	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Attributes of the Five Phases	Curved and Straight Generating and smoothing	Warm, Hot, and Flaming	Develops and nourishes transformation	Clear and Respectful	Cold, warm, downward moving; moistening the lower and sealing the storage
Five Organs	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys
Six Viscera	Gallbladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder Three Burners
Five Sense Organs	Eyes	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ears (Two yin)
Five Body Parts	Tendons	Blood and Vessels	Muscles and Flesh	Skin and Body Hair	Bones and Marrow
Five Directions	East	South	Center	West	North
Five Colors	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Five Trees	Pine	Paulownia	Willow	Poplar	Cypress
Five Essences	Spirit Soul	Spirit	Intention	Material Soul	Will
Five Primordials	Primordial Inner Nature	Primordial Spirit	Primordial *Qi*	Primordial Emotion	Primordial Essence
Five Body Shapes	Long	Pointed	Round	Rectangular	Stout
Five Sounds	Short	High	Even	Long	Low
Five Emotions	Anger	Joy	Worry	Sadness	Fear
Five *Qi*	Windy	Hot	Dampness	Dryness	Cold
Five Flavors	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Spicy	Salty
Five Healing Sounds	Xū	Hē	Hū	Xì	Chuī
Five Body Fluids	Cry (Tears)	Sweat	Saliva	Mucus	Spit
Five Liquids	Body Fluid	Marrow	Essence	Blood	Liquid
Five Musical Pitches	Jué	Zhǐ	Gōng	Shāng	Yǔ
Five Outer Appearances	Nail	Complexion	Lips	Body Hair	Head Hair
Four Seasons	Spring	Summer	Indian Summer	Autumn	Winter
Five Constant Virtues	Benevolence	Wisdom	Fidelity	Righteousness	Propriety
Five Precepts	Killing	Sexual Misconduct	Lying	Stealing	Intoxication
Five Thieves	Sorrow	Fun	Desire	Anger	Joy
Five Venoms	Anger	Hatred	Resentment	Vexation	Upset
Five Demons	Fury	Greed	Doubt	Sluggishness	Insanity
Five Transformations	Generate	Grow	Transform	Focus	Store
Five Occupations	Worker	Official	Farmer	Scholar	Merchant
Five Pulses	Stringy	Flooding	Slow	Floating	Sinking
Five Basic Numbers	Three	Two	Five	Four	One

Five Full Numbers	Eight	Seven	Five	Nine	Six
10 Heavenly Stems	1st and 2nd	3rd and 4th	5th and 6th	7th and 8th	9th and 10th
12 Earthly Branches	3rd and 4th	6th and 7th	5th and 11th 2nd and 8th	9th and 10th	1st and 12th
Eight trigrams	Thunder and Wind	Fire	Earth and Mountain	Heaven and Lake	Water

The *qi* of the heart is called the vermilion bird. It travels along three paths on the front of the body. One path follows the heart meridian, allowing it to flow under the tongue, where it turns into saliva. From here it is swallowed through the throat into the heart (reaching the heart organ). Inside the heart it transforms through an opening: at this point it is called perfect fire. Another path runs excess *qi* of the blood into the upper palate and lets it flow out on the right side: this is known as spirit water. There are two substances that flow out from the upper right palate, one originating in the lungs, the other in the heart. Their flavor is different but both flow from the right side: it is important to relish their taste.

A yet different substance flows from the left side: this is called saliva. If the saliva in the mouth is particularly sour, it belongs to the liver and has come from there. As long as the mouth is sour, the eyes will shed tears: in this case, steady the liver. All these different smells and flavors indicate which organ you need to work on during practice. Once the mouth feels sour, the eyes will start to shed tears and the moment they do so, the liver is no longer active. Similarly, anything that flows out from under the tongue immediately affects the heart, indicating that it is close to inactive. Once the heart is inactive, the hands will cramp, and when that happens, they will not open even if you strike them. So, when you notice fluid arising under the tongue, make sure to immediately move your fingers.

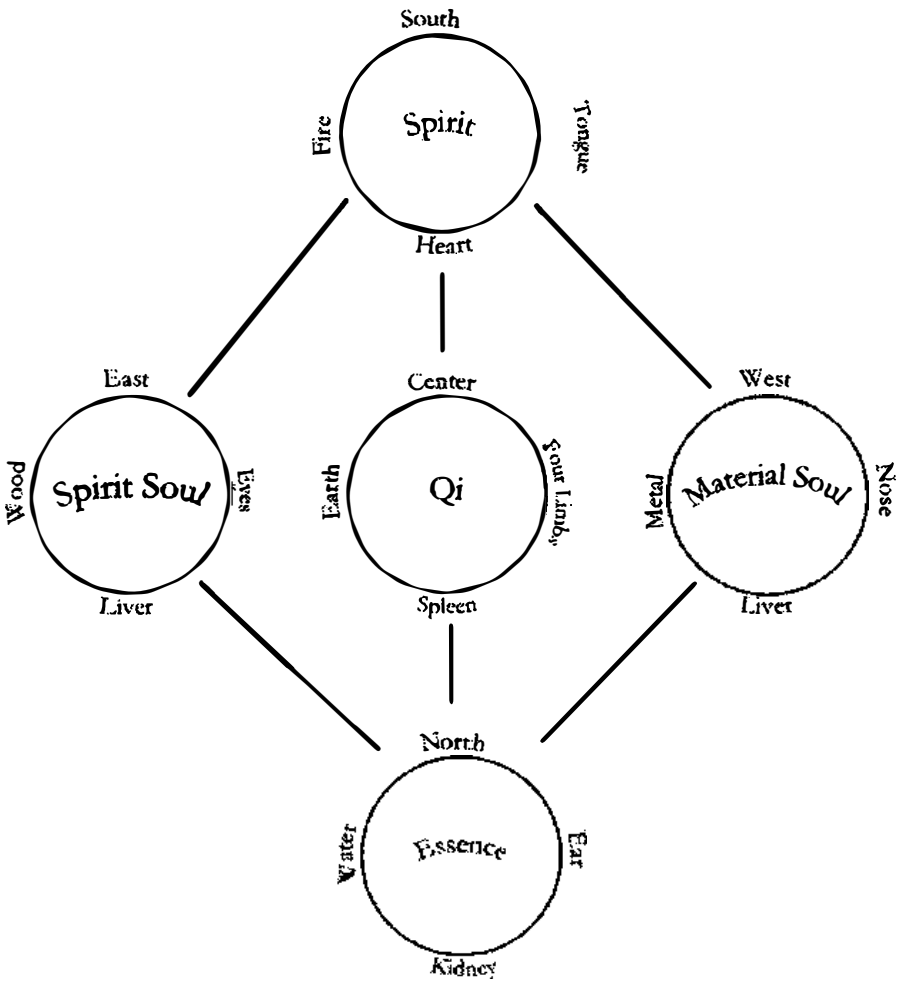
In yet another route, the *qi* from the right side of the stomach flows up into the ears. This is called the circuit of heaven. If this moves up into the head, it may lead to tinnitus, so make sure it goes into the kidneys. If kidney *qi* is abundant, it may flow under the tongue and out the right side. There are two substances that flow out from the right side, one originating in the lungs, the other in the kidneys.

4. Chart of Five Phases and Five *Qi*

The five phases in the body are the liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. Master Chongyang said: "Absorbing the five phases means taking in the energy of the liver, lungs, heart, kidneys, and spleen." The liver belongs to the east, its heavenly stems are *jia* and *yi*, its phase is metal, and its *qi* is called the green dragon. The lungs belong to the west, their heavenly stems are *geng* and *xin*. The lungs are the organ representing metal, and their *qi* is called the white tiger. The

heart belongs to the south, its heavenly stems are *bing* and *ding*, its phase is fire. The heart is the organ representing fire, and its *qi* is called the vermilion bird. The kidneys belong to the north, their heavenly stems are *ren* and *gui*, its phase is water. The kidneys are the organ representing water, and it *qi* is called the Dark Warrior. The spleen belongs to the center, its heavenly stems are *wu* and *ji*, its phase is earth. The spleen is the organ representing earth, and its *qi* is called central yellow.

Essence produces *qi*; *qi* produces spirit; spirit and material souls oscillate on the right and left.



The ancients said:

> The spirit soul matches the east and resides in the liver.
> It belongs to wood and emerges through the eyes.
>
> Spirit matches the south and resides in the heart.
> It belongs to fire and manifests at the tongue.
>
> The material soul matches the west and resides in the lungs.
> It belongs to metal and rests with the nose,

Essence matches the north and resides in the kidneys.
It belongs to water and opens through the eyes,

Qi matches the center and resides in the spleen.
It belongs to earth and appears in the four limbs.

Essence, *qi,* spirit, as well as spirit and material souls form the foundation of the myriad beings. The myriad beings depend on them to take birth; they follow them to transform. As all beings transform through these forces, they grow, but if they lack them, they decline. People of the world should not be unaware of them. Thus people have certain classical sayings:

No *qi*: he's a dead man.
No spirit: he's a fool, a sucker, or a lunatic.
No essence: he's s frail and sickly.
No material soul: he's deformed and weird.
No spirit soul: he's lovesick and melancholy.

All this means that you have to work on the five phases in close parallel, avoiding any lopsidedness or deviation. Make sure to fully realize the wondrous meaning of their processes of generating, overcoming, and counter-restricting.

Chapter Fifteen B

Explanation of the Alignment of the Five Phases

There are three models of describing the generating cycle of the five organs, those commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine, Daoist medicine, and shamanism. It is hard to say which one has it right. However, they all believe that the kidneys are generated first, although that does not match the classical order of the generating and controlling cycle of the five phases. There is an ancient saying: "As regards the activity of the five organs, when they start to move to disperse the body fluids and forms of *qi,* five circulations and six *qi* begin to appear." The route taken by the *qi* manifestations matches the meridians, and each organ has a particular fluid that circulates along this route in the same way as described in Chinese medicine.

The kidneys and bladder are collectively called the kidneys in Daoist medicine. They also call "kidneys" the complex that include bladder and kidneys plus the reproductive organs, then classify them as negative and positive. The kidneys are positive, the bladder is negative. The bladder is negative because surplus essence from the kidneys flows here, which they discharge as liquid waste. This establishes them in a relationship of lord and minister. Daoists also say that the kidneys generate *qi.* They believe that when the organs are formed in the mother's belly, the kidneys form first, forming the prenatal root. So, you want to protect the two kidneys and the lower abdomen at all cost.

People's metabolism is a continuous process of circulation to transformation. For example, the lungs govern the distribution of blood, and since they have neither entrance nor exit, the body fluids and liquids they metabolize depending on the blood circulation to go places. Thus we speak of body fluids and liquids. In addition, the lungs also transform *qi,* using a route of evaporation. For this, they use the meridian system. When the lungs vibrate (being continuously active), some of the *qi* and energy generated moves along the meridians, while the body fluids and liquids flow along with the blood. Any unwanted blood is discharged and only good parts remain.

Energy flowing inside the body follows the meridians, which resemble rivers and lakes. They flow all over the body (as all three types of medicine agree). The body fluids and liquids move mainly in the organs, and each organ connects with another. The energy transformed from *qi* and *qi* itself follow

various routes that also exit from the body. If they do not exit, there are meridians that radiate outside.

Among the various wisdom methods, circulating the five phases forms a major facet of fundamental practice that goes back to experiments of ancient Daoists. Ever since high antiquity, they have related the five organs and six viscera to the five phases. Their generating cycle forms a sky like the Taiji diagram, but when we want to be liberated from it, we do not use this, applying instead the diagram of the eight trigrams, which is extremely useful.

If you are elderly, circulate the five phases frequently, until they are fully active. When you have good *qi* quality in your body, there is no need to use your hands to guide the five organs during circulation. Also, once you have gotten good at this, you can start practicing in reverse order. Start with using your hands to guide the circulation, then do it again without hands. Also, once the five phases circulate smoothly, you can move on to do the practice of the Three Immortals. Using the hands to guide the movement of the five phases is using the external to guide the internal; practicing the silent circulation of the five phases is using the internal to guide the internal. The *Lingbao bifa* says:

> In the *zi* hour (11 p.m.-1 a.m.), the kidneys generate *qi*. In the *mao* hour (5-7 a.m.), it reaches the liver. The liver is yang; its *qi* is dominant. Yang rises to enter the yang position, which matches the spring equinox in nature. In the *wu* hour (11 a.m.–1 p.m.), the *qi* arrives at the heart. Here its accumulation generates liquids, a feature that matches the summer solstice, when yang reaches its zenith and yin starts to rise.
>
> In the *wu* hour, therefore, the heart generates liquids. In the *you* hour (5-7 p.m.), they arrive in the lungs. The lungs are yin; their liquids are abundant. Thus yin descends to enter the yin position, which matches the autumn equinox. In the *zi* hour, the liquids reach the kidneys and their accumulation produces *qi* as yin descends to earth, and yang is generated anew. This matches the winter solstice. From here the cycle begins again, continuously circulating without end.

This passage indicates the basic cycle of nature, which operates according to the twelve double hours of the day. People must match the natural time cycle in their circulation, so that the human and heavenly bodies merge as one. Although this is a hard goal to reach, the human and heavenly bodies can reach this oneness. In fact, all people function according to this natural circulation, flowing along with it every single day, but since their flow speed is too slow, they do not notice it. When compared to the natural cycle, the circulation of energy through the meridians in ordinary people either lags behind or rushes ahead. If they are ahead, they cannot sleep and get up early; if they lag behind, they have a hard time waking up and cannot eat when hungry.

The silent circulation of the five phases is the first method of the heavenly circuit as it flows through *mao* and *you*. After completing this, all the five phases and four symbols return to the center. Once they reach the *wu* and *ji* positions of earth, they are called the heavenly circuit of *mao* and *you*. The silent circulation of the five phases is also called minor elixir circulation, reflecting the fact that the five organs closely match the rhythm of the four seasons. Minor elixir circulation is the first requirement of refinement practice: unless completed successfully, there is no way to produce the seven- or nine-based elixir circulation. Thus, this practice forms the foundation.

A notion concealed in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* is that there are two brains in the human body controlling us. Combined with the Daoist understanding of three realms, this leads to the theory that there are two brains, one in the head, the other in the abdomen. Another purpose of practicing the silent circulation of the five phases is to find the heavenly heart in the abdomen (realm of earth), which is a different heart from the main organ used to control the organs in the abdomen. Doing so, we can circulate the *qi* properly, moving it in accordance with the time of day. This also connects to the level of Daoist practice where heaven and humanity become one. The energy to practice the silent circulation of the five phases comes from the lower field.

The energy of the heavenly heart in the abdomen thus arises from the lower field. This energy is the birthplace of our physical body. Chinese medicine calls it the womb, lower field, or lower elixir field, using the metaphor of a strong ox plowing a field for the idea of gathering energy there. This energy emerges from the lower field, then pushes through the five phases to circulate, that is, it pushes through the organs. When the organs circulate smoothly, the *qi* in the meridians can circulate clockwise; when they run smoothly, all other conduits as well as the eight extraordinary vessels are flowing just right as well.

The eight extraordinary vessels are yin in nature, with no beginning or end. Thus, they have to connect [to other meridians in order to access them]. After activating the twelve paired meridians, you can start opening the eight extraordinary vessels. If the twelve meridians are not open, the eight extraordinary vessels cannot flow. This is because the nature of the twelve meridians is to serve as the mother, while the eight extraordinary vessels are the children. Without a mother, there can be no children. Therefore, the goal of the silent circulation of the five phases is to prepare for the opening of the twelve meridians. Once they are open, the body will begin to balance left and right.

Another goal of practicing the silent circulation of the five phases is to refine essence to transform *qi*. The "Particular Discourse on the Five Repositories [Organs]" of the *Huangdi neijing suwen* says:

> The brain, marrow, bones, blood vessels, gall bladder, and female womb are six structures where earth *qi* is generated. They all store yin and are symbols of earth: they store and do not process, which is why we call

them extraordinary mansions. The stomach, large intestine, small intestine, triple burner, and bladder are five structures where heaven *qi* is generated. Their *qi* symbolizes heaven: they process but do not store.

They all receive the turbid *qi* of the five repositories [organs] and are accordingly called mansions of circulation to transformation. They cannot hold onto it for long, but quickly rotate and process it. Also representing the gate of the material soul, they are the servants of the five repositories, unable to store water and grain. What we call the five repositories, therefore, store essence and *qi* but do not process them, which means they are full but cannot be replete. The six mansions [viscera], on the other hand, circulate to transform various materials without storing them, so they are replete but cannot be full.

The five organs (heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys) are all containers or repositories that preserve yin essence, and if you want to transform this essence into *qi,* you must practice the silent circulation of the five phases. The six viscera (gallbladder, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, triple burner, and bladder) are organ containers that digest and eliminate. The extraordinary mansions have both capabilities, to store and digest essence. In addition, Daoists believe that there are several further organ containers that can store, digest, and eliminate all by themselves: these are the three elixir fields. Divided like the triple burner into upper, middle and lower, they are the upper, middle and lower elixir fields.

In fact, practicing the silent circulation of the five phases causes the five phases to move actively, that is, to circulate spontaneously, but this alone is not a sign of success in practice. To reach success, you also have to practice reverse looking and inner observation, so you can see their form, color, and position. At this time, you should also practice according to the *Huangting neijing jing.* Make sure to see the five organs and properly understand how the silent circulation transforms their *qi.* Look to see how the *qi* change shape. This is described in the upper part of the *Xiuzhen tu.* In Daoism, the *qi* of the five phases is called the five circulators: they belong to yin *qi* and have a yin nature.

The text explains that shape and symbol are different in terms of both words and expressions. When practicing the silent circulation of the five phases, the shape of the organs may not yet have changed, but their *qi* has transformed. By passing through the organs, the *qi* changes its shape to become a symbol. While it is in the process of transformation, we speak of its shape; when this shape finds expression in a different form, we speak of symbol. The shape is either complete or incomplete. When incomplete, it can manifest as spirit or material soul (but it cannot be called yin and yang). Spirit and material soul pervade everywhere, in fact, in the final analysis they are yin and yang, and yet they cannot be called yin and yang, because on the inside they still contain some sort of substance. We really do have organs, which contain spirit and material souls and thus form their body.

Practicing the silent circulation of the five phases in the order of the generating cycle, we start with the lower field, because energy resides there and it accumulates as you steady body and mind. Once it has accumulated in the lower field and you start to release it, the first step is to push it into the bladder, then move it into the kidneys. The reason for this is that there is water in the bladder, making it the organ that can transform *qi* the fastest. The kidneys, moreover, are the root of prenatal existence in the human being, and the bladder forms part of the kidneys, which are its governor or ruler. If you want the kidneys to generate *qi,* first push the bladder to transform *qi,* then move it into the kidneys. From here it is easy to have the kidneys generate more *qi.* In addition, also make sure to refine the bladder specifically.

Traditional Patterns

In ancient times, the four symbols were called Chief of Essence Chief (Master Lü called it Method; Master Qiu called it Metal Man), Young Girl [mercury], Infant [lead], and Yellow Lady [sulfur]. They work according to the loving relationship of mother and child. Essence Chief is something in the lungs; Young Girl is an opening in the heart, which corresponds to the south, the stems are *bing* and *ding*, and fire, Infant is the essence of the kidneys, while Yellow Lady is the *qi* of the spleen. These are the four symbols in the human body, and do not include the liver. Women's alchemy prescribes the use of internal fire to circulate metal, making sure to eliminate at least one of them, lest you cannot decapitate the red dragon. Chapter 12 of the *Daode jing* says:

> The five colors blind the eye,
> The five sounds deafen the ear,
> The five flavors baffle the palate,
> Galloping to hunt drives one mad,
> And desiring rare goods causes one to do harm.
> Therefore, the sage acts from the belly rather than senses,
> Keeping the former and rejecting the latter.

Here we do not chase after the universe, the natural world, or the relationship between people, nor do we pursue the seven emotions and six desires. We only cultivate our body and nurture our inner nature using internal alchemy. Master Lü said that "the five colors" are the five organs, "the five sounds" are the internal five phases, "the five flavors" are the medicine in them, and "galloping to hunt" means the five moving toward the prime. (This does not mean that the five *qi* move toward the prime or the five dragons pay respects to the sages. Rather it refers to circulating things within the furnace, never allowing them to leave the body). The outer five organs, moreover, refer to the five organs you, I, and he can perceive physically.

Proper guiding instructions are very important in the practice. Even if only one person listens to them, he moves properly from the bladder to the liver, but others may have a hard time. When the group instructions have reached a certain place, but you are not there yet, the teacher has to wait for you to get there, and by that time the energy of others may have moved on from the liver to the heart. If you are not synchronized with the teacher, you become a liability; if the internal and the external do not match big trouble will arise. The main reason why the internal and the external do not match is that you exhale to an organ but then forget about it and no longer know where it is. This causes the circulation through the five organs to stop, and when there is no movement, there is no sound. Having neither movement nor sound, "spirit of the valley does not die." It is like the sound of leaves falling in a mountain valley: being unable to hear is our loss.

The leaves produce sound, even if they float down very slowly, most prominent by willows and poplars. If there is only silence, you will suffer, so when practicing the silent circulation of the five phases, there must be some sound. This sound is the indication that lets you know the energy is moving from one organ to another (matching the internal five phases). These internal five phases, then, work together in generation, control, and counter-restriction.

When the movements of the internal five phases are synchronized, and the circulation from one organ to the next works well, we speak of shifting essence to transform *qi*. The *Huangdi neijing* contains a section of this title, which is very short and mentions the method, but does not explain what exactly it is or how to do it. This is because during the era of the Yellow Emperor this method was already widely known among the Chinese people, who used it as a health exercise. Thus the Yellow Emperor did not inquire about the specifics of the method but rather asked Qibo:

> I have reached a pretty good level of self-cultivation and can live in harmony with nature, but in my jurisdiction people are still sick, so what can I do about that?" Qibo told him to use the methods of matching the four seasons, acupuncture, moxibustion, and herbal remedies to cure diseases.

This shows that, while the Chinese have had personal methods of cultivating the self and nurturing inner nature for thousands of years, shifting essence to transform *qi* has become a Daoist secret. When the *Huangdi neijing* was compiled, acupuncture, moxibustion, and herbal remedies were not standardized and thus are discussed extensively. At that time, physicians also discovered that if people did not follow the rhythms of nature, they would develop problems, and the *Huangdi neijing* discusses this. Shifting essence to transform *qi* thus appears only occasionally and in few sources.

The five musical pitches on the outside are *gong, shang, jue, zhi* and *yu*. They can be generated by five different ways of intonation, a practice the Chinese

people have linked to the sounds produced in the organs. When practicing the silent circulation of the five phases, there must be sounds: they serve as indicators that mark the movement of internal *qi* from one inner organ to the next. Once the five organs begin to move, you can enhance that movement artificially as you make a sound matching the circulation: these are the five pitches.

Chapter 1 of the *Daode jing* speaks of something "wondrous." The universe has created us, how subtle and wondrous is that? But there was no sound. Was there really no sound? When a baby is born it "cries." When Daoists speak of "wondrous," they mean very subtle. The five sounds are also very subtle. Working with the five changing sounds in the organs, if you use your orifices of brightness, you will not be able to hear anything. But if you listen from the belly brain, you will start to hear them. If the five organs circulate automatically, naturally opening and closing, they can also shift essence to transform *qi* from one organ to another and thus generate the five sounds, convert *qi* into the five kinds of medicine, create the five flavors, and causes the internal five *qi* to move toward the prime.

The brain in the head takes care of very few things, constantly changing along with all the various transformations. It is in fact quite coarse. Daoists think this brain is rather naughty, only wanting to grab good stuff, so we have to train it to control itself and not move other people's things. The abdominal brain relies on understanding that comes from the inside; it notices what other people have and decides what you should or should not want. You will experience this in the organs. If the organs can move by opening and closing, they can also shift essence from one to another, and since they each belong to some force, the abdominal brain does not want everything, but is rather civilized. Desiring only its own things, it does not want the rest and will eliminate it.

Substances eliminated in people are called toxins; many things not eliminated are other organ substances. In Daoist terms, what the organs generate are all good things. Modern medicine says that toxins are produced because the five organs do not know how to open and close; unable to move, they stick together. They cannot transfer what people want from one organ to another. Practicing the silent circulation of the five phases allows this transfer to happen. If you can move things among the organs, shifting essence to transform *qi,* they will generate the five flavors—the medicine of the internal five phases. This medicine manifests in the orifices of brightness, so that when the silent circulation of the five phases reaches the mouth, some people develop a bitter taste that soon turns sour and also burst into tears, indicating that the five phases are in alignment and the body has reached harmony with heaven and earth.

If the five organs function automatically, naturally opening and closing, and can shift essence to transform *qi* from one to another while bringing forth the five sounds, their *qi* can change into the five kinds of medicine and turn into the five flavors. It can also create the original five internal *qi* moving to-

ward the prime. At this point you can aim for having them issue vapors simultaneously.

At this time, the five organs are already complete full and do not need anything else. Since they contain a heaven and earth, to get them to issue vapors, it is important to share this substance with other people, transmitting it from one brain to another brain (spirit). Master Lü said, "This is something hard to obtain: a tiny spiritual light inside." Sages see with the belly and not the eyes, and people in general have three eyes: two ordinary eyes and the Heavenly Eye. If sages saw only with their eyes, how would you know what is inside? Yet some places even sages cannot see. We have to first learn from them, come to see ourselves clearly, and realize that certain things are not ours.

When using the external to guide the internal to activate the five phases, use pulling, pushing, rotating, pressing, and circulating forces. As you do this, in all cases determine which force to use and how much to apply. When you sit in meditation, practice the love between mother and child and perform all movements properly. When your hands get to the bladder, you may have a feeling in the liver. At this time, when the water rises, your hands should stroke the liver area. If your heart beat increases or becomes uncomfortable, immediately raise liver *qi* and lower heart fire: this is the best way.

When practicing the circulation of the five phases, the stomach can be squeezed casually and other organs can be pinched and grasped, but the heart must never be pinched or grasped, only pulled slightly. Some people look at their hands as they practice. This is wrong: you should always look inside. Also note that during the practice, the lungs and trachea do not have the same color.

Stroke without a particular alignment and let it be natural, but feel that your hands issue some kind of substance, which can penetrate the flesh and go directly to the organs. Also, make sure your intention penetrates them. The range of your strokes should match its size of the organ, covering its outer with a special focus on any ailing areas.

The orifices of brightness each face specific organs, so that steadying them can cure many organ diseases. Steadying the organs mainly involves grasping, squeezing, pulling, pushing, pressing, and stroking them. Stacking the hands is one way of doing this, applying the force of both hands. This also engages the meridians, allowing yin and yang to combine and become one.

If any organ is not healthy, first practice aligning it by itself, then circulate the five phases. The alignment of the stomach and intestines should be done repeatedly, ranging from the esophagus to the anus, leading to a feeling of being cool and refreshed inside and increasing your chance to make organ sounds. After that, look up and straight ahead, send out the steadied energy of the stomach and intestines. People with lung disease should practice the alignment of the stomach as much as possible to keep it healthy. When practicing the alignment of the lungs alone, the penetrating force should be a little stronger,

but make sure it does not penetrate to the heart, which would worsen the condition.

The stomach is an independent organ, complete with entrance and exit that connect to self-functioning passage ways, through which things pass in and out. Thus, the energy of all the organs comes through spleen and stomach. The stomach belongs to earth; the small intestine belongs to fire; the large intestine belongs to metal. As you practice the alignment of the stomach and intestine, when you push *qi* through the small intestine, you may discover a "high song of Qujiang on ascending the multi-storied tower," i. e., elixir circulation based on jade fluid. The connection between the bladder and the stomach depends on the large intestine. The kidneys belong to water, and the large intestine can absorb water, which means it can nurture the bladder. All four combine to support the spleen and stomach. When the spleen is drawn into the stomach, and the stomach and intestine are perfectly steady, the four symbols will also be in harmony. This means, you first have to steady the stomach and intestine. In addition, there are two secret orifices in the large intestine. In ancient times, opening them was described as follows: "When the golden chamber is filled with jade, the secret orifices open. When the valley road turns around, the secret orifices close." There is a horizontal separation in the duodenum, where two holes are directly connected to the lungs. When the practice is done well, these holes will appear and the secret orifices open.

Practice the alignment of the stomach and intestine, reaching the bottom of the small intestine, which is called the curved mansion. From here raise it into the ascending colon, using the hand gesture called cupping the hands with *qi*. Next, press down and at the same time send out the matching image and color. Let the hands separate, while using the eyes to emit and observe.

Any painful place just grab with your ten fingers, and maybe you will catch something. After grabbing the area, smell your fingers to determine any odor. When your fingers grab into the five organs, you may notice a feeling of cold inside, indicating that your power is already there. When you pull a certain part, see if other parts move also and observe the relationship among them and how they solve it. For example, when you pull on the liver and the kidneys vibrate, stop pulling and immediately circulate the five phases.

Why do you circulate the five phases but not move the spleen or stomach? It is because there is something wondrous in the stomach. The stomach is like the earth located in the center, forming the center of the eight trigrams. In ancient times, the heart, liver, lungs, and kidneys were the four imperial images. They all rotated around the stomach, passing through the four directions. All organs related to the stomach. In addition, it contains several secret orifices, leading to the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, one yin and one yang.

Organ Connections

When practicing the silent circulation of the five phases, pay attention to how the organs combine. For example, when you hold the bladder *qi* and move it to the liver, do not hold your breath or loosen your hands lest it returns to the bladder. In the old days, this was called deficiency of kidney water. In fact, it is not a deficiency, but a failure of the liver to receive kidney *qi* after it gets there, thus, the bladder *qi* returns automatically. At this moment, hold the breath, stop for a while, then move it into the liver for transformation. At the same time, pay attention to the loving, merging, intersecting, and generating action among the five phases.

Kidney *qi* is black in color. As you shift it from the kidneys to the bladder, the black color will emit a light, allowing you to see whether there is urine in the bladder and whether it emits a light. As long as the *qi* is in the kidneys, it is very deep, then gradually lightens, until it gets white when reaching the bladder. Thus, we speak of black and white, yellow and white, or yellow and black. All these are closely linked.

The lungs are very large, reaching all the way to the clavicle, thus they require a lot of stroking, covering the entire range. The lungs are like white mercury, which is also called the golden fluid. They are located above, with the kidneys below, which is the reason why it is very difficult to establish a generating pattern between them. It is important to use the method of minor elixir circulation. First perform one revolution of the generating cycle, then raise it up from the bladder to the lower field. Gather energy there and as soon as the area erupts, it will start to spin.

The liver has two leaves, the heart has two chambers, the lungs have two lobes, but only the stomach has an entrance and exit. Still, each part of the body has a Taiji symbol: there are many marvels and wonders. If you only stroke one leaf of the liver, you will miss one part of the Taiji, which then becomes invisible. So when practicing the circulation of the five phases, it is important to stoke all parts.

During the silent circulation of the five phases, movements should be particularly slow. As you inhale, move the *qi* into the precise position, then hold the breath. As you hold the breath, silently recite a chant. Inhaling is the mother giving birth to the child, holding the breath is nurturing yourself. As you hold the breath, pull something up to this location, then transform it for nourishment.

In the beginning, hold the breath for a short time, then breathe naturally. After gaining some experience, hold the breath as long as possible, wait for the color of the organ to change, then move it forward as you inhale. This method is important, so figure out how it works through looking inward, so that you can use it again in the future. In the beginning, you may not see anything. To

remedy this, subdivide the organs, then stroke each organ area until you get a sensation. Use the pressure you generate to better push the movement.

The problem of practicing the circulation of the five phases is that some people do not know the exact position of the heart, spleen, and stomach. Also, the five organs tend not to move alone. As you focus the *qi* in the heart, the lower side should not move; as you focus it in the heart and lungs, the shoulders should remain immobile: as the shoulders rise, so does the diaphragm. When practicing the circulation of the five phases, to work on the liver, inhale and focus the *qi* in the liver; as you exhale, let it release. As you inhale into the liver, nothing else should move and only the liver should be active. (It really is impossible to be completely motionless, since everything moves a little bit.) When you reach the spleen and stomach, focus it only in the spleen and stomach.

The same applies to the lungs. As you inhale, focus the *qi* firmly in the lungs; as you exhale, let it release (expand). Always keep the tempo of focusing very slow. Also, very slowly focus it in the lower abdomen, at the same time listening to the guiding instructions. As you exhale, slowly let the abdomen drum outward. After you get good at this, don't overdo it, lest the body gets hot. The main purpose is to transform the *qi* of the organs, so you must go to each of them and activate it. However, the problem is that the whole body is moving. You must find a way to accomplish this. The number of times you move the organs is flexible; it depends on your situation. As you keep breathing, if you feel the organs are still not active, imagine them starting to move as you increase the length and number of breaths as well as their intensity and force.

Especially the heart sometimes seems not to be moving. In this case, increase your practice time, working a little longer and more often, but there is no one correct number (of how many times each inner organ should move). Proper guidance comes with rules, but in the end the rules are not all that useful when giving instructions and you do not need particular guiding instructions to be able to see whether you can make the organs move.

If you practice by yourself, sometimes you may not know where spirit goes or when it returns, or you may not be able to connect to it. In this case, follow the guided instructions. Your greatest worry is that your breathing becomes uneven. The sign for this is that you, as you exhale or inhale continuously, experience a sudden interruption. Your breathing should always be steady and uninterrupted, so do not suddenly start a second breath. Instead stop holding it (avoid not breathing), let it be fluid and without break. Then pause briefly after a first inhale and breathe again, which makes a total of two inhalations with a pause in the middle. In the same manner, inhale, pause for a moment, then exhale. If you completely stop breathing in the middle, you are interrupting the process. There must be continuous motion back and forth, so never do two exhalations or two inhalations. There should be no interruption in the flow

of breath, otherwise it will be uneven. Also, if you hold the breath for too long, it will be interrupted. Don't let it stop in the process.

If you cannot close your eyes when practicing the circulation of the five phases, you have to steady your liver: this is called being skillfully wondrous. If the heart is not comfortable and beats irregularly, the tongue probably has lost contact with the upper palate. Quickly adjust the tongue, this is called being subtly wondrous. When your tongue moves while you are working on the liver, this indicates that the heart wants something. Quickly circulate the *qi* upward: this is a skillfully wondrous move. However, if the tongue is immobile, things will not circulate upward and the action is in vain.

While sitting in meditation, there may be internal movement in the ears or the Heavenly Eye may begin to twitch, tighten, or pulsate. This means that the kidneys are in urgent need of something, since the kidneys open through the ears. Because, moreover, the lungs are the mother of the kidneys and it is essential that the mother nourishes the child, at this time circulate *qi* in the lungs, which should make the ears return to normal. The purpose of practicing the circulation of the five phases is to let the orifices of brightness close comfortably, to connect one organ to the next, and to open the Heavenly Eye.

When raising the *qi* from the bladder to the liver, the bladder may feel pain or the kidneys may move. This is a sign of deficient kidney water. If it rises from the kidneys, push the water back, then stroke the kidneys or bladder. After this, raise the *qi* again and let it return to its position naturally. The bladder and liver stand in a mother-child relationship, so when you stroke them well, it should be comfortable to raise the *qi* from the bladder. Also, as you push it from the heart into the stomach, if the heart feels uncomfortable, this indicates that stroking the area is not enough. When both the heart and the spleen move, this means that there is an imbalance in the mother-child relationship. If the spleen and stomach move, don't panic but move liver *qi* to supplement the heart fire, making sure that the heart does not move first and out of order. Then, lower the heart fire to supplement the spleen and stomach, and they will stop moving.

The liver *qi* is the hardest to refine; leg pain during practice will also interfere. The liver opens through the eyes; it is wood, which generates fire. If you have a liver ailment, frequently raise kidney water to reduce heart fire. The liver is controlled by the lungs, whereas kidney water nurtures liver wood. In the process, there maybe stealing and snatching, which makes it hard to refine. The kidneys are the husband of the heart, the mother of the liver, the child of the lungs, and the wife of the spleen: one symbol facing the other four. During practice, if one symbol ails, the others must be adjusted, and if you only adjust one of them, it will cause problems. If the liver is hard to refine, raise kidney water to supplement its *qi,* but then the kidneys may be deficient. The kidneys are prone to both yin and yang deficiencies, therefore, if the liver needs yin *qi,*

the kidneys become yin deficient; if it needs yang *qi,* they become yang deficient.

When the heart is ailing, usually the liver is dominant, therefore use liver *qi* to move the heart. If you see the spleen *qi* is reduced, circulate the liver to enhance the spleen: all this you learn through experience. When your heart does not feel well, you can raise kidney water, because the kidneys control the heart. If the heart *qi* is deficient, raise liver *qi* to supplement it. Since the liver is the mother of the heart, use it to nurture the heart.

When you are stroking the bladder, keep your palms face down, since the bladder is squeezed by the legs while sitting in meditation. If you do not pay attention to this, you might mistakenly stroke the lower abdomen. So keep the palms facing down, stroke the bladder until it is very hot: it is best when it is burning hot.

During the practice, if there is *qi* stagnation, this may have to do with the controlling cycle. For example, the liver *qi* wants to control the spleen *qi,* but if the spleen *qi* is dominant, the liver *qi* cannot control it. This means, there is *qi* stagnation in the liver. Find out whether the liver yang is hyperactive or maybe the spleen *qi* is dominant and abundant. Once you know the correct cause, you can take corresponding measures to solve the problem.

Before practicing, if the chest is tight and you cannot breathe, adjust your nose and breathing. When the organs circulate in the controlling cycle, we speak of water and fire assisting each other. You can transfer kidney water into the heart at will, or you can move it through freely. However, you have to return it to the kidneys from the heart and it is not easy to descent the heart fluid. For this, you need help from the phase earth. Earth is the husband of water and manages it. So, circulate fire and move it into the Yellow Court, causing earth to return. The Yellow Court represents the earth position, which is very helpful.

When practicing the silent circulation of the five phases, you cannot circulate things blindly, move them around without a purpose, or stroke, turn, push, and pull without clear direction. When practicing according to the generating cycle, start at the lower field. After the energy has accumulated and is released in the lower field, push it directly into the bladder, then circulate it from there all the way to the kidneys. The *Qingjing jing* notes that this process also involves the correct understanding of the five virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and honesty. The first step to realize is not to expand them outward but activate them toward yourself. Are you benevolent and righteous toward yourself as you practice the silent circulation of the five phases? In fact, when practicing, we exert a kind of killing *qi* on ourselves. When raising *qi* from the bladder to the liver, if the bladder has no *qi* and you force it into the liver, or if you raise *qi* directly from the bladder into the heart, you are all going to be uncomfortable: this not exercising benevolence toward yourself.

If the guiding teacher is wrong, without benevolence or righteousness, you must pay attention to correct him. The *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* refers to this as

"the teacher gives to the disciple, and then the disciple gives the teacher." "Righteousness" means that you do not have enough consideration or the right *qi,* so once the bladder (mother) *qi* is transformed, you have to give it to the liver (child), but if you raise it instead to the heart that is improper.

"Wisdom" means to have knowledge of others and yourself, whether the organs need something. So, for example, what does your liver need? To ascertain their needs, continuously practice looking inward and inner observation, look inside to see what they need. This is the first wisdom, a way of forgiving yourself. "Honesty" means the secure awareness of which inner organ has what need, and if any has a special need to take a little more care of it. You do not need to practice fast. If you move fast, you may rush past it. This is just a simple metaphor. If you practice the silent circulation of the five phases well, it does not hurt no matter how long you do it.

During the practice of the silent circulation of the five phases, make sure they all cooperate smoothly. Ancient masters noted that it is of utmost importance for the five phases to be in mutual harmony. If they are not in harmony, your legs will hurt. The reason why they might not be in harmony has to do with their mutual love: if you do not let them develop mutual love and try to practice, they will not be in harmony. Once they reach harmony, another problem is that they do not interact properly and if they do not interact, the generating cycle will not manifest. This has nothing to do with whether the *qi* has returned to the lower field. If you can develop heat in the body, you can transform it into original energy.

Once the three fields are sufficiently linked and start to move, the upper field can directly reach to the lower field, and the lower field can directly reach to the upper field. Essence, *qi,* and spirit contained in the three fields duly return to the residence of spirit. After you recite a chant, you will find something in the residence of spirit that exits through the Crown Gate. This process is called "the yang spirit emerges from the husk." After it exits, you must bring it back and focus it in the lower field. If it appears again, once more focus it in the lower field. The thing that goes out will not only be known to you, but also to outsiders, so at this time you need to retreat to a secret room and avoid people seeing you. The exiting energy arises from practicing the silent circulation of the five phases. If in your practice spirit and life force are not sufficient, nothing can exit. In other words, the silent circulation of the five phases is key.

Practice the silent circulation of the five phases every single day, thereby to increase your original energy. The five organs are real, and if you do not make good use of them, you cause a great loss for yourself.

Chapter Sixteen

Augmenting Yang Fire and Reducing Yin Impact

Augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact are two refinement methods to be practiced at the same stage, called differently by various ancestral teachers. The *Lingbao bifa* and *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* describe them as flying the gold crystal from behind the elbows. It involves several training methods, of which augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact are the most common. The practice divides into several steps, flying the gold crystal from behind the elbows and circulating essence to supplement the brain. Augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact represent a process of energy conversion, among others, allowing the creation of elixir circulation based on jade and golden fluid. Its dominant application, the one Patriarch Zhengyang described as the best, works with three vehicles or carts. We may have no cart yet, but we have a road and before we can follow the road to perfect cultivation, we need to practice augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact.

The practice has been transmitted secretly in the Daoist tradition. To refine an internal elixir and concoct an elixir in the body, you must practice it carefully. If you only guide *qi* through the heavenly circuit, the energy in the body will not transform. While there is an immediate change in *qi,* eventually it will no longer be there, which means that you cannot concoct an elixir, since it depends on cosmic *qi* transforming into fluid. First by transforming it into fluid and then into a solid state, can you create an elixir.

Augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact comes in two ways, serving two different kinds of people in their preparation for alchemy. The first is for ordinary people. Once you have gathered the stem *qi* in the lower field, inhale and focus it inside the lower field (being highly determined and with some force); as you exhale, push it from the lower field into the opening of life and death (in front of the life-death point located on the pelvic floor between the anus and the front genitals).

Regardless of your gender, place it a bit ahead of the Ziwu line. From here, men, push it into the vas deferens and urethral areas. Inhale and use the conscious spirit (your thoughts and intention) to guide perfect *qi* up along the spine, pulling it from the sacrum to the Upper Narrows (behind heart) and the Jade Pillow (back of the head). Roll your eyes upward, so the *qi* can reach Hundred Meeting at the top of the head. As you exhale, guide it from the Crown Gate

through the center of the eyebrows, nose, mouth, chest, and abdomen, back to the opening of life and death. The channels you use in this practice are the Conception and Governing Vessels.

Another way is to block off the entire front yin (genital) area, a way of destroying the root of sexual desire. (Women do not need to practice this.) As you inhale, guide the *qi* up the back. When you reach the Jade Pillow, roll your eyes, then exhale and move it down to the area between the navel and the lower field. From here, inhale the life force down to the lower field, then exhale it to the opening of life and death. This method was adopted into Complete Perfection after Patriarch Wang Chongyang. Ideally, you practice it together with reverting essence to nourish the brain.

As regards breathing, to augment yang fire, inhale long and exhale short. Do this no more than 36 times, 4 x 9 being 36. This number is considered one round. To reduce yin impact, exhale long and inhale short. Do this 4 x 6 or 24 times. This makes one round. To conclude, inhale once more and focus the *qi* in the lower field.

Explanation

The Conception and Governing Vessels have their source in the womb. Its location is defined variously in different stages of practice. Originating in the lower abdomen, the Governing Vessel moves down from there to the pelvic floor, then rises up along the spine, reaching all the way to the human center at the upper lip. Some people think that it moves to the lower lip and therefore your tongue should touch the upper palate. The Conception Vessel moves down from the lips and returns to the lower abdomen. This is their basic state before birth. After birth, there is way to open them. Several conditions apply: one of them is that, if the anus is not completely sealed, it is impossible to run the *qi* through it. From there you reach the sacrum, thereby sealing the three lower yin orifices as your tongue presses against the upper palate. Doing this, you can augment yang fire and reduce yin impact.

The route you use when silently circulating the five phases is a form of the heavenly circuit known as the heavenly circuit of *qi*. The route you use when augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact is a circuit that opens during the transformation from the heavenly circuit of *qi* to that of liquid. After turning *qi* into liquid, the essence of the five phases returns to the lower field and starts a new circulation, that of liquid. This circulation may only occur occasionally in the beginning. But that does not matter: build the road first, then ride on it in your cart. All practices focusing on inner nature are like this.

When you practice reverting essence to nourish the brain, the *qi* may sink down from the three fields, in which case you should practice in the second way, using different exercises. Once the *qi* is focused in the lower field, push it down into the opening of life and death and pull some substance from the sacrum to the Upper Narrows and the Jade Pillow. Roll your eyes upward and

open the Heavenly Eye, viewing the three fields below. Just as in the first way, there are two paths, but here the *qi* is very hard to get down. Feel it at the top of your head, and see if you can get it to go down. At no time push it down directly from the Crown Gate but push down the front along the Conception Vessel. The possibility that you can push it down inside is minimal, because this area is sealed and not open—except for in small children. It really only will go down after you have established the skill to connect and move all three fields.

In both ways of augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact, if you do not have a clear vision of going beyond human existence, you may well destroy your root of sexual desire (genitals). This path directly gets rid of genital functioning, destroying the numinous root. It renders a man to be like a eunuch, making him feel rather awkward. Through medical surgery, a man can be transformed into a woman and vice versa, which, too, destroys people's numinous root or genital functioning. In this cultivation, the same thing happens, but it does so more naturally. We do not advocate that young people practice this. Older people, however, find that after they practice for a while, there is no more root of sexual desire and it is very complicated to restore should they ever think of activating it again.

Augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact should be done according to a systematic schedule. Augment yang fire between the end of the *hai* and the beginning of the *zi* hours (11 p. m.). During the *wu* hour (11 a.m.-1 p.m.), but no later than the *you* hour (5-7 p.m.), you can reduce yin impact. During the *zi* hour of rising *qi,* augment yang fire; during the w*u* hour of dying *qi,* reduce yin.

At the *wu* hour, according to the laws of nature, *qi* is in the heart, the highest point in the torso above the center of the abdomen. At this time, the *qi* in a healthy person rises to the top of the head, increasing pressure both in the head and the upper torso. This causes a huge difference between the pressure in the head, and that in the lower abdomen, making it best to reduce yin impact then. During the *zi* hour, the kidneys generate *qi*. It reaches the liver at the *mao* hour (5-7 a.m.) and gets to the heart at the *wu* hour.

Once yang reaches its zenith, yin starts to rise, producing liquid, which in turn begins to sink down. By the time of the *you* hour, yin is ample and yang is rare. As it sinks down further, yin reaches its zenith and yang is generated. The kidneys bringing forth *qi* in the *zi* hour matches the timing of heaven and it is also used in ways of matching human times to those of heaven (a way of creating the state of heaven and humanity joined in oneness). At this time, inhale long and exhale short. Augmenting yang fire centers on the number 9, using 4 as a period of time; reducing yin centers on the number 6, also using 4 as a period of time. 9 is the number of full yang while 6 is the number of supreme yin. They originate in the *Zhouyi cantong qi* and are most important in elixir concoction.

As long as you do not have a proper cart for practice, just do your exercises using the conscious spirit (thoughts and intention). Once you have a

proper cart, there is no more need for intention, which might run off by itself. Now we have no animal-drawn cart yet, so we are pulling the *qi* to move. There are three barriers along the spine (sacrum, Upper Narrows, and Jade Pillow), so the masters say we need three different types of carts. We may get to the Jade Pillow, but then it is very hard to move on. At that point, the head is motionless but the scalp and eyes can move, so roll your eyes upward, and the *qi* starts to go through. Without that, it will not move further. This is the first step and the classics insist that we practice step by step, dividing the techniques into two parts based on the time and the position of the trigrams.

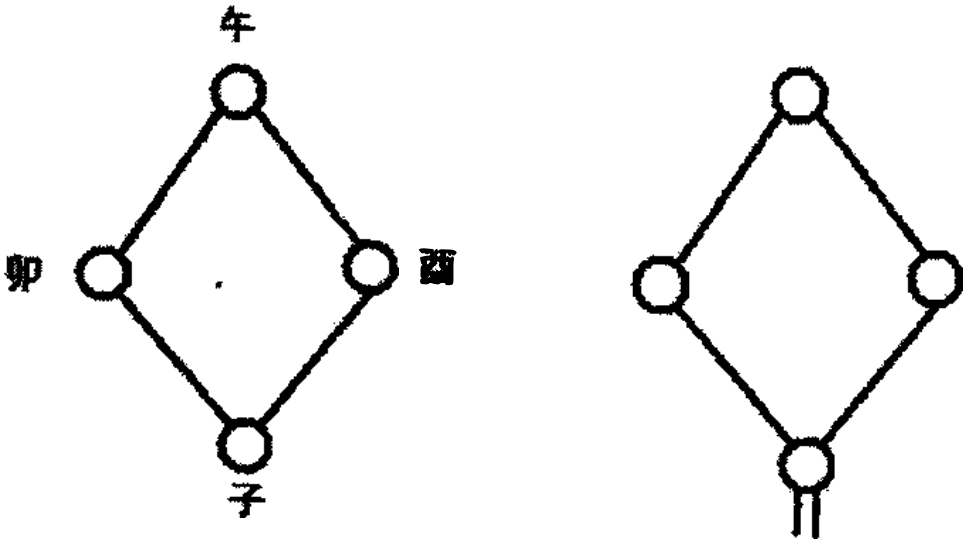
Timing is one thing, trigram position is another. You cannot stop at any stage, just make it to some point and rest, move up and not go through. If you do, the *qi* will automatically fall back down. If there is no rice in the pot and no fire in the stove, the steam will collapse. Destroying the numinous root is even harder. When you augment yang fire and reduce yin impact, the *qi* will manifest between the eyebrows and radiate out. As the masters say, "If there is no rice and no water, you cannot increase. If the pot is empty and the stove is dry, you cannot reduce." "Rice" here stand for the *qi* of the five phases in the internal organs, which you can transform. "Water" means the cosmic *qi* generated in the kidneys. "The pot is empty" means there is no rice in it; "the stove is dry" indicates that it is cold and not cooking. Fasting helps in the practice; it is impossible to do when you eat your fill.

The movers of the three carts are the ox, ram, and deer as pulling animals, metaphors indicating the progression of the firing times during elixir concoction. The so-called River Carriage represents the process that moves the carts. In internal alchemy, "crossing the river" is yet another metaphor. Daoists use it as a metaphor with the understanding that the human body contains little yang and much yin. This means that the internal passage ways are dominated by water; in other words, there are complex water ways or rivers in the body and the key to cultivating *qi* is learning how to move along them. Guiding the *qi* with focused intention, circulating it through the entire body, you can create the great elixir. The *Zhong-Lü chuandao ji* says, "The River Carriage arises in the central river of the north" (ch. 12, "On the River Carriage")

In the process of energy circulation, you have to get through numerous barriers and obstacles, notably the sacrum, Upper Narrows, and Jade Pillow. During internal cultivation, as long as primordial *qi* is plentiful, you can easily make it through these three barriers. Master Lü asked: How much money do you have? Can you get into a car and travel myriad miles? The energy of the universe and of the five phases can change, transforming essence into *qi*—the more energy we have in the arteries and meridians, the more money we have. The spinal cord is like a road you travel on: it costs money, we need to give it money (paying toll), the more the better. All this shows how hard and tiring it is to augment yang fire and reduce yin impact.

When circulation gets very slow or even stops without advancing, you should do appropriate healing exercises, but let them be guided by *qi* movements, lest you "pull up the sprouts to help the growth" (waste your efforts). When you augment yang by nine degrees of temperature and reduce yin by six, keeping the speed rather soft, we speak of riding an "ox cart." When primordial *qi* is plentiful and you augment yang by 36 degrees (temperature) and reduce yin by 24, we speak of a "ram cart." When circulation gets very fast and you augment yang by 216 degrees and reduce yin by 144, numbers that represent multiples of the great numbers of the Qian and Kun trigrams in the *Yijing*, we speak of a "deer cart." The three carts or vehicles, therefore, are metaphoric descriptions of the natural firing process, not activated by your conscious intention.

Many masters draw a diagram like the one on the left, some including the signs for the hours, others leaving them out. Without specific times, the process it not hard, but once you write hours, it gets difficult. The second diagram shows an added passageway: the gate of life and death, also found in the *Xiuzhen tu*.



Every time you sit in meditation, augment yang fire and reduce yin impact to see if there is anything moving. After steadying and regulating the *qi* throughout the body, practice attracting immortality to make sure the upper and lower semi-circular moons are properly established. Next, seal the body, silently circulate the five phases and focus the *qi* in the lower field. From here, two lines emerge. One is moving down and if you find that it is moving down, make sure to augment yang fire and reduce yin impact, ending with an inhalation as you circulate the *qi* to the lower field so you can grow and nourish it there.

The other line is moving up, in most women running to the Center Chest (CV17, also called Milk Flow) a point between the nipples. If it is active, ob-

serve the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal. In men, if it moves up, find a way to push it down, using hand gestures and breathing. On the inhalation, push the *qi* down beyond the navel and into the lower field; on the exhalation, raise it up but not above the heart. Eventually move it into the lower field to transmute it in the lower abdomen (using Sword Tablet practice). If it stops at different points in the abdomen, keep it moving. After silently circulating the five phases, let it rest in the lower field and there will be no more path. At this time, there is no more need to augment yang fire and reduce yin impact, no point in observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal. Just rest there and wait. Eventually the path forms and you practice again. You can do some empty stepping, just practice some gentle method and eventually you can guide it to move up.

The correct way of practicing is to work cycle by cycle, steadying the movements of *qi* until the top is clear and the bottom is turbid, which gives rise to a Taiji state within. Next, silently circulate the five phases (activating the internal ingredients), then practice calming spirit at the Ancestral Opening and collect ingredients from the outside. Let your eyes observe the nose, the nose observes the heart and the heart observe the Cavity of *Qi*. Send spirit light deep into the lower field. At this time, the *qi* of the five phases, the cosmic *qi* of yin and yang, and that of the external five phases all circulate to the lower field. From here, start circulating them. Begin by inhaling and gathering *qi* in the lower abdomen, then exhale to expand it, moving the *qi* to the opening of life and death. The circulation pattern changes, depending on day and night.

At night, inhale slow and exhale fast; during the day, inhale fast and exhale soft, matching human time to that of heaven. In the *zi* hour, the kidneys generate *qi,* which rises up from the bottom. Inhaling a little longer, you can inhale a bit more of yang *qi* and drop it a little faster. In the *wu* hour, yang *qi* is not sufficient: reaching its zenith, it must circulate. As yin *qi* begins to descend, inhale fast and exhale slow. This step is the most meaningful and mysterious.

Practice both, augmenting yang fire between midnight and noon and reducing yin impact between noon and midnight. Start one hour before—augment yang fire an hour before midnight and reduce yin impact one hour before noon. Make best use of the year, month, day and hour, as prescribed in the *Zhixuan pian* (Essays on Pointing to the Mystery). Work in the month in the middle of the year, the day in the middle of the month and the hour in the middle of the day. First augment yang fire, then reduce yin impact. You could also do just one of the two. However, it is best to augment yang fire around midnight and reduce yin impact around noon. Once you feel warm in the lower abdomen, start to reduce yin impact. While the paths are the same for both, the breathing is different and they lead to massively changed states on the inside.

To reduce yin impact throughout the body: turn your gaze and take a good look, then let it descend very slowly. Once your spirit has descended, calm and stabilize it. You know when augmenting yang fire and reducing yin

impact is successful when you feel a heavy object, a light (energy), or an elixir moving (the heavy object and light combined). Success in the worldly methods shows in having better skin and lighter walk as well as in frequent sounds in the abdomen, which feels as if thunder, lightning and electricity roll and flash there.

The explanation is that *qi* and essence are generated, which creates movement. When during the practice of augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact you feel a drop of some substance moving down, it is not a part of the larger body surface descending but a drop of perfect yang. If the larger surface pushes toward the back, you cannot practice augmenting yang fire and reducing yin impact. It is better to work with guiding the *qi* along the heavenly circuit, hand held with palms together, head lowered. As you then inhale, you can pass it through.

Chapter Seventeen

Ways of Inner Observation

The foundation of inner observation is turning the vision inward. For thousands of years, various methods of turning the vision inward have been transmitted secretly by Daoists. Even in the last century, there were only a few people who knew how practice these methods, which go back far in history and have been used since ancient times. Turning the vision inward allows you to see the deep structures of the body and discover the scenery within. Pervading your feelings and perception, it lets you see the world outside and, in combination with the inner visions of others, create outer reality. Key texts describing methods of inner observation include the *Huangting nei/wai jingjing* (Yellow Court Scriptures of Internal/External Scenery). They, as well as the *Lingfei jing* (Scripture of Divine Flight), transmitted by Wei Huacun, present various techniques available to the public, such as adopting the *qi* of the east and other directions and entering it into the body. Here we discuss ways of looking deeply inside ourselves, without the help of anything else.

When turning the vision inward, you can hear the beating of your heart and feel movement in your internal space. Your internal space is moving all the time—it is just like a magic lamp. A magic lamp divides into several levels, it is very beautiful inside and also contains something very beautiful. The Chinese call this internal scenery. It is clearly visible in the head, and the internal organs, but it is limited to the open spaces; you cannot see inside the bones. The methods are very potent, as is clearly recorded in the *Lüzu quanshu* (Complete Works of Master Lü).

How to Practice

After adjusting body and mind with the methods of attracting immortality, focus your full intention on the lower field in the lower abdomen. Then turn your eyes inward and observe it as you relax the entire body: shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and hands. Keep the spine straight, close your lips, lightly touch your teeth together, press your tongue against the upper palate, and keep the chin slightly tucked. Steady the breathing, making it soft, even, and long, attaining a calm rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. Do not change the position of your body but relax it completely, breathe slowly and steadily, and relax some more.

Continue steadying the breath, making sure breathing is soft, even, and long, each inhalation and exhalation perfectly matched and relax the entire body. Very subtly raise your head, slightly raising the *qi,* the eyes closed yet looking straight ahead. Do not gaze into the distance but keep your intention right in front of the eyes. At this time, you can start breathing through the Heavenly Eye point: as you inhale, look inside; as you exhale, look outside. As you subtly inhale, look inside; as you exhale, release *qi* outward through the pores of the head. Inhale again and let the pores of the head gather *qi* inward, allowing a light to arise in the open space of the head, then again exhale and release *qi* outward. Do this several times, allowing the pores of the head to move in rhythm, then gradually return to natural breathing.

Very slowly turn the pupils around to look inward and see what is inside your head. Observe the open space of the head, see whether there is an open space in the head, placing your full intention right into it. At this time, you may see a faint, vague light in front of you. Make your breathing soft, even, and long, steadying it again and again as your eyes observe what is inside the head. Now look up slightly and see the Crown Gate at the top of the head, and the Hundred Meeting point. As you keep looking inside, you may see a faint light in the head. Again, check the head space and squeeze it a bit: inhale and let the pores of the head gather *qi* inward; exhale and let them gently release it outward. As you inhale, let the pores get smaller and smaller; as you exhale and they release, let them get larger and larger. At this moment, the head will light up of itself.

After breathing for several rounds like this, inhale and let the bones of the head gather *qi,* squeezing it inward. Pay attention to any changes in the open space. As you exhale, let the bones of the head relax and the open space in the head release. Inhale and notice how the light in the head changes; exhale and let the bones release the *qi* outward. Inhale and let the pores and bones of the head gently gather *qi* inward; exhale and let them release it outward ever so slightly. Continue in this manner, gradually allowing the movement to get larger and larger. After a few rounds, return to natural breathing and see whether there is movement in the open space in the head. As you relax, focus your intention to consciously look inside the head space and notice any changes. At this point, your intention is turned toward the body in inner vision, allowing you to examine the open space in the head. Both your eyes gaze inward at this area to see what changes may occur.

Steady your breathing to be fine, subtle and long, then use your eyes to send the head space downward very slowly, with extreme care letting the intention descend and the entire body structure sink. When you reach the open space of the mouth, very softly swallow a mouthful of *qi* or saliva, carefully moving it downward. Whether you do this soft swallowing, move your attention and *qi* down into the open space of the chest, leading it into this area and sending it there. Look into the chest space and see whether you can observe your heart and both lungs. Softly inhale into both lungs and look inside to see what is inside.

Inhale and let the lungs gather *qi* inward, without allowing the pores to move: only the lungs should be active. Exhale and let both lungs release *qi* outward. Inhale again and let the lungs slowly gather, focusing all the way; exhale and allow them to slowly release. Inhale and use both eyes to look inside and see what is inside the lungs; exhale and have both lungs release. Breathe very slowly, making sure your breathing is steady and even and consistently soft, without producing any sound. Pay close attention to any movements of the lungs. As you exhale, relax the entire body and let it sink down. Make sure your breathing is fine, even, and long, especially fine. After breathing deeply into the lungs several times, move your intention to your heart. Listen to your heartbeat and have both eyes look inside to see what is there. Inhale and let the heart slowly gather *qi* inward; exhale and allow it to gently release. Keep slowing down and make sure your breathing is steady and even.

Now breathe more strongly and with more conscious intention for a few rounds, then turn it back to being soft and weak, ever so gently hold the breath, resting without exhaling or inhaling. Use both your ears to listen to the sounds of the heart, hear your own heartbeat, notice how it beats inside the open space. Very slowly match your breathing to the heartbeat, relax and silently count the heart rhythm, moving along with it. As you do so, the sound of your breathing should be quieter than that of your heart, which is your main focus. Keep making the breathing even finer, steadier and longer. Relax and allow the lungs to start moving up ever so slightly, gazing inward to see what is happening inside them, then gradually come back to natural breathing. From here, look at the lungs and the heart once more, observe the open space of the chest. Look inside and see what is there, then look again, the intention centered on lungs, heart and chest. Listen carefully with both ears to the rhythmic beating of your heart and the open space within.

The heart and the open space are both beating and the lungs are moving, too. Now drive the *qi* through the open space by breathing in and out through the nose. Nostril breathing is extremely soft and weak; open-space breathing is rather wide and large. Both the breathing and the movement of the inner space are greater than the breathing through the nose. Being aware of this, allow the open space to move and again listen to the heartbeat. As you keep on listening, look inward. After a while, observe the open space of the chest once more, looking very closely and properly and make your breathing particularly fine, subtle and long. Both in amount and sound your breathing should be softer than the movement in the open space. Listen to its sound; observe its shape. Gaze inward and see whether there is any change in the chest space, then gradually return to natural breathing.

From here, slowly and gently start to move the intention down from the central space, the open space of the chest. Use both eyes to send it slowly downward, moving it into the open space of the abdomen. As you move down, where the intention goes, the *qi* follows. Once the *qi* is there, spirit will come,

too. *Qi* leads and spirit follows. Do not let it descend too low, but see if you can observe your liver, gallbladder, spleen and stomach. Move down even further and see if you can observe your large intestines, lower abdomen and kidneys. Keep it moving slowly and see if you can examine your bladder as well as all external and internal genitalia. Inspect and examine it all, paying particular attention to the sexual organs and the various points and orifices of the pelvic floor, like the Meeting Yin point. Now the intention has reached the lowest point of the torso. For women, as you inhale, slightly raise your frontal genitalia, releasing them again on exhalation. For men, as you inhale slightly raise the penis and testicles, letting them sink or drop again as you exhale.

From here, for women, close the iron swing door, raising it as you inhale. As your front genitals rise slightly, find a way to raise the *qi* to the lower field, exhale and let it descend again, then relax. For men, inhale and raise the outer genitals, allowing the testicles to rise. Keep moving them up, then as you exhale, very slowly let them descend again. Do this several times. As you inhale, see where the heat is coming from; as you exhale, let the entire body relax and return to natural breathing. Make the breathing very smooth and steady, keeping each breath soft, even, and long. Focus your intention and carefully bring it to the lower field. Release it and see what changes may occur in it. If a light appears before your eyes, very slowly pull it inside, circulate it to the lower field and release it. This is the best way to have the entire body issue an inner light.

After the *qi* gets to the lower field, inhale and gently focus it in the lower abdomen, then exhale and release it. Inhale and gently focus it in the lower field, making sure you move it toward the inside very softly. Pay attention to any movement of the lower field: it should be beating. Also take note of the relationship between the lungs, the heart and the lower field.

Again, after breathing like this several times, listen for any movement of the lower field, using both ears to listen very carefully. Breathe through the nose to control this movement. If the lower field moves too fast, let it gradually slow down. Then increase your speed of breathing, still through the nose and see if the lower field follows it. Inhale and observe the movement of the lower field; exhale and release it. Hold the breath briefly, listen for any the movement of the lower field and watch it.

As you allow your breathing to follow the movement of the lower field, both its sound and amount should be less than that of the movement in the lower field. You may increase the movement a little (but don't necessarily speed it up). If the sound and amount of movement of the lower field are greater than those of breathing, slow down your breathing and listen to the movement of the lower field. Now shift your intention into the lower field and circulate spirit there. Inhale and focus the *qi*; exhale and release it, then gradually return to natural breathing. Now spirit is in the body, the intention is in the lower field. Relax the whole body, pay attention to the changes inside. Adjust the breathing

evenly, adjust the breathing into soft, even, and long, spirit is always in the body and do not let it come out.

From here, very gently tighten the lower abdomen, tensing the area and note how this causes the genitals and orifices of the pelvic floor to raise. All three yin orifices should rise slightly, at which point you apply some more gentle pressure to the lower abdomen. Beginning students should create tension with some vigor, making sure the open space starts to be suspended.

Now inhale and focus the *qi* into the properly set up open spaces, focusing it in all three. Exhale and see how the spaces get bigger. This is done by internal breathing, not external. Inhale and let the *qi* focus inward into the open spaces; exhale and let them get bigger from the inside, expanding outward. Inhale and pull your inner self into something very small, pulling it into a line, so it starts to look like a bottle, exhale and let the inside of each space grow bigger. Expand it outward from the inside. Inhale, the inside resembles a closed bottle, exhale and let the entire bottle stretch and get bigger.

Inhale and focus the *qi* into it; exhale and let it grow bigger. Inhale and release it from the inside; exhale and expand it toward the outside. After breathing like this several times, gradually return to natural breathing. Again steady the breath to make it smooth and natural breathing. Now, relax the entire body, then steady the breath once more, making sure it is soft, even, and long. Breathe in and out smoothly while paying close attention to any changes inside.

At this time, as the intention is within the lower field in the lower abdomen and the entire body is relaxed, let the lower field settle down, let all three fields settle down, the upper, middle and lower fields all very slowly stabilize. Allow body and heart to settle down, let the entire body stabilize, let all the flesh be steady. Breathe naturally, never worrying about your breathing. Let the nose do the breathing by itself and completely relax. Sit in meditation for a while, then conclude the practice.

Explanation

Looking inside and inner observation are not the same. The classics talk mostly about inner observation, which reflects a high level of practice. Master Lü said, "Look at it and do not see it—how can you know and observe?" "Observe" means to know without seeing, while "look" means to see, but it is not seeing in the ordinary sense. Daoists tend to speak first of more advanced practices, then discuss more basic techniques, so they place inner observation first and looking inside second. As long as we do not know that our internal organs exist inside, how can we observe them? "Observation" also means "observe and don't move": as long as I don't move something, I can learn what it is doing. Here we present only methods of how to observe the heart and lungs. The more advanced one's practice, the finer it gets and the more difficult observation becomes. The lungs are relatively easy to see, the heart has a clear beat to which we can listen.

As your pain is getting excruciating, you may be in such agony that you see black spots in front of your eyes. At this moment, if you do not move, you may be able to look and see. Steady your breathing again with some force, gently look forward and a bright light will appear. Pull it back repeatedly, moving it into your head. To a certain degree, your head will feel different than usual, it seems to have some more subtle meaning. Keep looking from the outside in and as soon as your gaze moves inside, the skull starts to change.

After a faint light appears, try to look up slightly, toward the Crown Gate, and the Hundred Meeting point. Move your eyes gently upward, roll them and raise them up. In fact, the texts tell us to look down first, then turn the eyes up as if rolling them. Even blind people can do this. As you look toward the highest point in the body, a soft brilliant light appears in the head. It should be faintly shining, but it won't appear if you look into the open space.

Here is how it goes: Look at the light shining in the head, and start breathing through the pores of the head, making sure they move along with the skull, focusing and releasing them both together. This is hard. Focus the whole thing, focus all the way, then release. Once you have released, an open space appears and from here you can gradually move it down. You should know how to breathe—we won't speak of it here. Use your eyes to first move it down, slowly descending it from the top, shifting it with your eyes little by little. In this way, you move the light down.

Once most of it has moved down to the open space of the mouth, push it further until it will not descend any more. If you want it to descend, but it won't go down and only moves occasionally, or if there doesn't seem to be a faint light in the head, it is because of what Daoists call the Twelve-storied Tower (throat). Once it reaches the mouth, concentrate your intention on it and breathe ever so slightly. Swallow the *qi* (as breath and saliva) and make it go down into the lower open space. This works because there is a connection between the upper and lower parts of the body via the trachea. Once it has gone down, immediately practice breathing with both lungs: as you inhale focus the breath into the lungs; as you exhale let the lungs release. To do so requires that the body surface is immobile: only the lungs move. As they do so, a light will shine forth, radiating brightly. From here, move the intention to the heart and start breathing with the heart.

Once you are done breathing with the heart, hold the breath for a short moment and listen to your heartbeat. As you do so, your breathing starts to match the heart. The faster the heart, the faster the breath will be. It may become very fast, indeed, so use your nose to guide the breath inside but do not move the surface of the body. The purpose of breathing with the heart is to control the heart, causing it to beat more slowly than now. As you slow it down, the entire cycle slows down. As soon as the cycle slows down, the body temperature drops. As soon as the body temperature drops and the cycle is soft, you can live longer. Medical research has confirmed that as the cycle slows

down, there are fewer heartbeats. Also, as the heart beats more steady, the body temperature drops, which are both conditions of living longer and increasing longevity.

Listen to the heartbeat for a while, making sure it gradually calms down, then return to natural breathing. Breathe naturally and move it down further to reach the lower field. This completes the first step. In other words, you have gotten as far as the diaphragm, which separates the different sections of the body and from here you are starting to enter the internal organs.

Sitting extremely still, the pain may become excruciating. At this time, raise your head, and look ahead. You won't be able to calm spirit in the ancestral opening, but you can take practical steps toward it. Look ahead, and never mind whether it's dark outside, your eyes are seeing something slightly different. Never mind whether it is light, at this moment revert our gaze, observe your inside and look within. Why can there be a light? It is not the same light as on the outside. Outside there is cosmic *qi,* the natural *qi* of the universe; inside there is a mixture of original to transmitted energy. This means there are two different open spaces, the one inside being easier for practice. However, it is hard to open, so keep on looking for the light and it will be there. The procedure is to let it move down first, then look at the open space within and once you see it clearly, let it rise up and again look into the head. This is the process of cultivation and refinement.

For inner observation, Daoists speak about activating the conscious spirit. The primordial spirit is always in the body, neither wanting nor able to leave it. So the practice is to continuously observe its movements to transformations in the open spaces within, around their periphery, as well as along the edges of the universe (or, rather, the human universe).

Looking inside and inner observation require two kinds of breathing, internal and external. How they correlate and interact is most interesting.

External breathing is mainly through the nose, inhaling and exhaling with increasing slowness until the breathing becomes very subtle and starts to move through the pores. As external breathing through the nose becomes soft and short, it leads to pore breathing, which is fine and long. At this point, another kind of breathing begins, which is internal and comes with its own path. Wherever you want it to go, there it will go, moving within the rhythm of breathing as we decide. For example, you inhale and imagine the *qi* to go to the lower field; you exhale and make it leave the lower field. You inhale and move the lower field ever so slightly and so on. You can also inhale and put some pressure on the lower field, exhale and place yourself right there. This is one way. Another way is to inhale directly into the lower field, going straight there, to exhale and let the entire body release. In this way of breathing the internal leads the external. We should do this often.

There is yet another way. Briefly hold the breath and shift the internal *qi,* making the pores move, so that they match the tiny, subtle breathing through

the nose. From here you can expand inside, then inhale and focus the *qi,* gathering it on the inside, then exhale and expand it. As you breathe through the pores, you can start looking inward, focus the *qi* ever so slightly on the inhalation and expand it outward on the exhalation. In this way you breathe internally, exhaling until the lower abdomen visibly enlarges.

During inner observation, these two kinds of breathing should start to combine and once they do so the inside of the body seems to be empty and open. At this moment, look again and you should be able to see things. The two lungs and the heart are easiest to see, so start with them. If there is no light in the head, you may still try to move it down, but when you reach the chest, you may still not see it. There must be a faint light in the head, and once you can see that, use your eyes to look inside your head. When you see what is inside your head, if you do not pay attention while looking down, your head will not have a light. But if you look at the Crown Gate, and the Hundred Meeting point, you will see a faint light. As soon as you relax your effort, it goes out, but when you tighten up, it lights up. This tightening action—keep it slight: increase it a bit and there is light. When you have that, concentrate and sit very still. In this way, when practicing inner observation, you certainly can see something.

Daoists say that people have two brains: one in the head, and one in the abdomen. The latter is often called Yellow Court in the classics. Daoists call the head brain the Central Palace among the nine palaces, located at the center. The two brains connect to each other. Which of them is the ruler of the body differs, depending on the Daoist you talk to. Most of the time, the brain cannot command us. If you want to sleep but cannot, according to Daoist belief, it might be because of the abdominal brain, so you make sure it is in good shape and yet the head brain may not let you sleep. The two brains are hard to connect into synchronous activity. The main reason why we sit in meditation is to closely align them, but even that is not easy. The one with the least obedience is the belly brain: it can't see a thing and has a hard time imagining stuff. When your leg hurts and you try to get your head brain to order your belly brain to hurt no more, it won't work at all. However, once you know how to practice looking within, you can easily use your abdominal brain to stop any pain in the legs.

If you cannot sleep at night, get up and practice looking inside. The more you look, the better it starts to look. If you want to know whether you will be in good spirits, angry, or happy the next day, you can do so: it is all here. The brain is here to see whether you are happy. People are very strange: most keep looking outside and never look inside.

Chapter Eighteen

Contemplating Teachers and Parents

In Daoism, there is a practice before and during the Spring Festival (New Year's), described in the following verses:

> Contemplate your teacher, revere his image;
> Listen to your father, think of your mother,
> Desire to keep close karmic connections with them,
> See your true nature and enlighten your heart.

This practice is compulsory during any retreat as well as at home. To undertake it, pick a day three days before the Spring Festival to undertake this practice. The general rule is "one day each month, a special day each year." This sentence means that you must practice on a certain date each month and importantly on a holy day of the year.

How to Practice

Sit in meditation on your bed, close your eyes, steady your breathing and let spirit go out. Visualize your space, considering its size, shape and the people in it. Gradually retrieve spirit and once it has come back, start pore breathing. As you inhale, let the body shrink; as you exhale, let it expand. As Daoists have it, while the intention is in the body universe, spirit returns to the body. In this way steady the miniature universe in your body.

When you feel movement at the edge of your body universe (feeling the body pores moving), steady it (keeping the pores moving), then turn your eyes inward and look within, listen to the internal activity. Once your intention rests in the empty space inside the body (only the pores are still moving), think of your father or mother (pick one). As you have him or her firmly in your mind, ask him or her about his or her first and last name, questioning why you have this last name. Sit very still and contemplate.

Explanation

This practice comes in four types, centering on a teacher, ancestor, lineage, or ruler. If you practice contemplating your teacher with strong intention, this may lead to a cult. By the same token, if everyone started to contemplate on a certain person in the same way while he or she is still alive, this also can create a cult. These kinds of cults in the old days were called covens of witchcraft or sorcery.

To contemplate your ancestors means targeting the most famous master of a generation, such as Laozi, the Buddha, Master Lü, and so on. To contemplate a lineage is focusing on a religious organization or refers to a group's center. Honoring a group's center means focusing on a religion. "Lineage" indicates a religious school, group, or organization. When we speak of "contemplating your teacher," we speak of one of these four while warning you not to focus with too strong an intention. Doing so, you would eliminate the dedication to your parents, children, wife, relatives, and friends, which would be entirely irresponsible.

"Contemplate" or "observe" comes in two forms: clear and obscure. Clear contemplation happens when we look at our teacher and bow to him, asking him permission to become his disciple. We are looking at and bowing to him, but our intention is not very strong. Obscure contemplation is a form of inner reflection, when we honor him in the depth of our heart. These are the two forms. The teacher here is not a specific individual, but may be different people. The best teachers for all of us are our parents: the moment you took birth, the parents already taught you that they gave birth to you. Other than ourselves and our spiritual guides, all the things in nature with space and substances are also our teachers.

"Revere" is to be very quiet and deeply silent: do not open to brightness or place him into the light. Brightness and light in contemplating the master will not work. Both Buddhists and Daoists think that exposing the master to brightness is showing off. By contemplating the master quietly and in obscurity, we truly let the master's light shine forth.

"Image" comes in different dimensions: far, near, large, small and more. The rule applies that "as you contemplate an object steadily from a distance, the object will no longer be there".

A key time to undertake this practice of contemplating your master and revering his image is right before the Spring Festival. Sit in meditation and think of all kinds of people, things and affairs. Remember all the mistakes and faults you have committed throughout the year, going over everything you have done. One day each year may not be enough. Many people in the practice never even get as far as "listen to your father, think of your mother", but they should always make the effort to "listen to your sons, think of your daughters", which is a prime responsibility.

Older people may feel the presence of their parents, slowly becoming aware of what they are saying, even though there is no sound. Some memories may be sad or troubling, but in all cases remain aware of what your parents are saying. Although you may not understand it completely, you still have this feeling of presence, especially after they have passed away or is not close by. The sad and other emotions slowly let you remember more clearly and maybe you feel happy and excited. If you live to be older than your parents, you may be even sadder, telling your parents that they should have lived longer than you and how you in turn lived to be older than them.

To listen to your father and think of your mother is not an easy task, nor is it easy to shift from deep sadness to joy and excitement. If the parents seem to say something, you may not understand what they are saying; if they seem to not say anything, you close your eyes and cry. Daoists believe that connecting mentally to the parents is a very real thing, not just a feeling. A feeling would be a conscious event, but the practice is not conscious. Our parents are talking to us—what are we touching? It is a karmic connection, the "desire to keep close karmic connections with them", our very own, freely chosen wish. As we practice, we may well find karmic roots, thereby intensifying the karmic connections with our parents and master.

First "see your true nature," then "enlighten your heart." This means, you first find out what your true nature is and how you are connected to others through\karma, then you fully understand this (enlighten your heart). We need to bond deeply with our parents and master so that we ourselves can become good parents and great teachers (since we will have children and siblings in the future). Whether you have children yourself, the offspring of others is your next generation, too, so you are also a teacher. We are all connected through karma.

It is easy to see your true nature, but very difficult to enlighten your heart: the heart cannot be fully enlightened. Daoists tend to put the difficult first and the easy second, leading to the formula: "enlighten your heart and see your true nature." Undertaking this practice requires refinement to a certain degree.

"Contemplate your master, revere his image" is to practice calming spirit at the Ancestral Opening, allowing spirit light to emerge, then retrieving it in the body and there use it for the practice. Master Lü said, "My master rests in my heart, I contemplate him without spirit." Each day, retrieve the image of the master and worship it, placing it firmly in your lower field. To do so, mainly use spirit, focusing the image with its help. Also, focus celestial energy in your body. Since it is relatively large, let it turn into transmitted energy to create the image of an ancestor or patriarch. The image you use is not necessarily what you imagine, but as you do the second part of the practice, it appears as an image, which you then take it into the lower field to worship. This is not a photograph and if you are not sure if the image is true or false, do not undertake the practice. Generally, the image of an ancestor or patriarch is not easy to find.

"Listen to your father, think of your mother" is very doable, as is calming spirit at the Ancestral Opening. When the Heavenly Eye opens, close your eyes and imagine your parents. (If their image does not come up, this is very sad.) Most certainly an image of your parents will appear before you, but you may or may not actually see it, depending on whether you actually want to. Think of them carefully and fully, imagining two spaces. Very slowly, they will merge into one space, where you can place things related to your parents to worship. This is a way of converting transmitted energy into original energy. "The dead are alive and the living are dead" is one way Daoists think. After your parents have passed away, they are still alive in your lower field. As long as they are still alive physically, if you do not worship them, they are in fact dead. The moment you find a way to make the dead to be as if alive, transmitted energy begins to change.

It is hard to undertake the practice, but you can do it whether your parents are present. Since you can only think of one of them, there will be a struggle of choice. If you think of one, since this is unreasonable and unfair, the other will appear after a while. Think of him when he was young or old, or during the moment of death: visualize his image for a while. Then talk to him and see if he talks to you. You can do this while he is alive. This is a process of spiritual transmission, where spiritual transmission begins.

As you imagine connecting with your parents, the seven emotions and six desires will appear, including hatred and gratitude as well as all kinds of other feelings: do not run away from them. After imagining your parents for a while, you will come to think of your children and other family members. At this moment, you will know who is irrelevant and who is important, who has the heavier karmic impact. Then you realize that it is not easy to listen to your father and think of your mother.

Our parents gave us our body, we have to repay the debt we owe them and this debt is very hard to pay off.. The first way to honor your parents properly is through filial piety. As long as the parents are still alive, you have to obey and respect them; after they have passed away, you give expression to your filial virtue by practicing the first method of "contemplate your master, revere his image." Every day you contemplate the image of your parents to see whether it becomes three-dimensional, develops motion, vanishes and/or gains reality. The first part of the *Daodejing* talks about how a body does not seem to be there, yet it still contains essence. There still is a little bit of something there and this little thing has been stabbing your heart. Every day, as you sit in meditation, first take the image of the parents and enter it deep into your body, thus worshiping them with your own body energy. Practice until you have a clear impression and image of a husband and wife in your body. Once you have that, you understand that your parents have entered your body with the help of this practice. You will see them clearly as yin and yang. As you worship your dead

parents with this practice, you really let them live within you. There are several ways of worship.

One is to donate money to the temple; in this case, worshiping wrongly means supporting evil specters and thieving monks. Another is to contemplate your master and revere his image as well as look at the founding ancestors. Yet anotherr way is to burn spirit money on the grave: this is also worship, but not very effective, since we do not know whether the parents can receive it. Always worship yourself and practice in your own body. Listening to your father and thinking of your mother is the best method of all. Another method practiced by both Master Lü and Master Qiu is to hand copy the *Xiaojing* (Classic of Filial Piety).

In internal alchemy, the best way of worship is to start by taking one drop of perfect yang and entering it into the Kun palace. Coordinate your breathing with the rhythm of the body, allowing the entire body to become very still so that only the lower field moves. Now let the lower field absorb the internal body energy (original energy) and use it to raise the drop of perfect yang up from the yin area. This is not easy to do. Master Lü said that the main thing is for us to watch ourselves and see whether we can worship our own internal spirit. We need to rely on our internal body energy to worship and support the one drop of perfect yang.

Master Lü said to set aside "one day each month, a special day each year" to deeply connect with our parents and children (activating filial piety and caring). These are all postnatal entities and the practice is a postnatal thing to do. However, it is very real. Someone who leaves the family to become a recluse throws away all these responsibilities as well as the family, not caring about anything. There is a practice in Daoism that requires each temple to be closed for at least one day each year: otherwise it is not a true Daoist temple. They must determine at least one day each year when they do not ring the bell or chant the scriptures, never opening the gate.

Chapter Nineteen

Midnight Practice

Midnight practice originated with Master Lü. It is cultivation undertaken around midnight, during what Chinese call the *zi* hour (11 p.m.-1 a.m.). The practice is first documented in the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. It is not described in the classics, but was transmitted orally and through remembering it by heart. On the one hand, it is difficult to express in words; on the other hand, it is also secret. It is customary for the Chinese to call the two hours around midnight the *zi* hour. At this time, starting at 11 p.m, earth *qi* begins to ascend, matching the ascending stage of yang and the *qi* rising in ordinary people. By midnight, it has reached a turning point between ascending and descending and the transition is complete at 1 a.m. It is the same in your body: there an ascending stage of yang from 11 p.m. to 12 a. m, matching the stage when yang rises, expressed in the hexagram 24 "Repeat" (*fu* 复). Midnight practice, then serves two purposes: find a way to let the yang *qi* ascend and, after 12 a.m., let it slowly descend.

How to Practice

Sit in meditation on your bed, steady your breathing and body by using the techniques that attract immortality. You can silently circulate the five phases and circulate *qi* to the lower field. From here, look out straight with both eyes, then close them to gaze ahead far into the distance. Slowly retrieve spirit light from the distance, pulling it right before your eyes. As you pull it back, turn both eyes to look inward and see what is inside your head. Now let the eyes roll up to look at the highest point of the body (the top of the head, and the Hundred Meeting point, Crown Gate is the exit gate of the broken line). Notice the connecting line between the Hundred Meeting and Meeting Yin (perineum) points. After looking at the highest point in the body, turn the eyes again to look inside and down, gradually descending from the top. Continue to descend and go all the way down to Meeting Yin. Let this point descend once, then inhale and let the *qi* rise, moving the *qi* of Meeting Yin to the lower field. Once it reaches there, warm it and nourish it as a drop of perfect yang. This is the first basic training method of midnight practice.

During this process, your breathing should be subtle and soft, allowing the lower field to keep active. If you notice that the lower field is not active, use

your lower abdomen and breathing to get it moving. At this moment, *qi* starts to get active. There are several lines of *qi* movement in the lower field. The practice proceeds from here in various ways.

1. Guide the *qi* up and down, letting it come and go along a string (but we do not call it stringing the three fields together). As you guide it up, when you reach your head sometimes it will spin. At this moment you can experience in the head that you have nine palaces, what Buddhists call the colored glass space. It means that there is a space, beautiful and nice, that looks like a very bright glass. After this space is formed, if you want to know where a person is, no matter where, you can see it in this space. Daoists acknowledge nine palaces in the head, and they, too, look very nice. This space can be mutated or rotated. The nine palaces can be activated by rotating the Heavenly Eye point.

2. As you guide the *qi* downward, circulate it the Meeting Yin point. Sometimes it may turn and flow up the back. Because what is active here is not pure yang, but can be yang within yin or yin within yang, at this moment, yang *qi* will rise and yin *qi* will sink down. Yang *qi* ascends to the top of the body, then descends; yin *qi* descends to the bottom of the torso, then ascends (bouncing back up), so it moves in several spaces. This second step, then, means solving the problem after generating *qi* at the Meeting Yin point. Find where the *qi* goes, then proceed to reverting essence to nourish the brain.

3. Guide the *qi* forward, into the front genital area. At this moment, by all means raise your front genitals, letting them rise up. Older people should do this method often to increase their vitality and extend life. If the *qi* flows easily to the front genital area in older people, this is not good; make sure it does not do so. For males, it goes forward to the testicles, so make sure to raise them up also. Females should raise their front genital area, seal it and raise it up again, then let it rest.

As long as there are only three paths of energy lines, midnight practice is not yet complete. See whether it ascends or descends and use the methods we already have for either case. If it is not active, it rests in the lower field and there should be heat in this area. At this time, slightly raise the three lower yin (front and rear genitals as well as the Meeting Yin point), then briefly hold the breath and release it. Celestial energy will arrive shortly. Once it is there, wait for changes in the body. Some people may shake, the *qi* may flow along a yet different path: everybody reacts differently. From here on, stop controlling it and let it flow on its own. It may not move much, but it will move well.

Sit until it is no longer active, never guiding it, then circulate the *qi* to the lower field and nourish it. This works with the pores of the entire body. As you inhale, guide cosmic *qi* into the lower field; as you exhale, guide it from there to the pores. Do this a few times, always working very slowly. Next, stop for a while and see if there is any reaction. If there is no reaction, do it a few more times. If it moves, you move with it; if it does not move, you push it, so it does move. The key is to have a good practice of listening to and moving along with

the breath or moving along with and listening to the breath. If it moves, we speak of listening to and moving along with the breath; if it does not move, we speak of moving along with and listening to the breath. It is necessary to let it move. Once it moves, you start guiding it. Once it reaches the head, change your hand gesture and practice calming spirit at the Ancestral Opening. Do not let it get away.

Explanation

It is important to distinguish between working with aligned midnight, living midnight energy, midnight practice and more. If the focus is on heavenly cultivation methods, we speak of midnight practice. If the focus is on myself doing the heavenly cultivation methods, we speak of working with living midnight energy, which arises often but can be perfect or false. The foundation of the both midnight proper and living midnight energy are methods of attracting immortality and silently circulating the five phases. Midnight practice involves borrowing earth *qi* and generating yang *qi* for the practice.

Living midnight energy appears once yang *qi* starts to get active. When it does so, immediately meditate. For males, as you inhale, focus in the lower abdomen, raise the anus and focus *qi* in the testicles; as you exhale, release it outward. For females, as you inhale, focus *qi* in the lower abdomen and raise the anus, close the gate and focus *qi* in the uterus (this is the big cauldron); as you exhale, release it outward. As soon as sexual desire arises and the internal mechanism begins, we speak of living midnight energy.

Both men and women have living midnight energy, which is accessible and active at various times. Once it appears, use martial fire to refine it, that is, strongly control any thoughts of desire. Should you fall asleep and wake up suddenly, meditate immediately and you will feel a change inside. In fact, this is when yang rises in the body; it is also living midnight energy. If you are not sleepy and cannot go to sleep, just keep meditating until spirit is no longer in the body. Once it gets away, you can go to sleep. Master Lü describes over eighty ways to work with living midnight energy, such as observing money with open the eyes at midnight, becoming aware of lust and desire at midnight and so on. Only people well versed in cultivation can do it.

Alignment at midnight in Daoism refers to the idea that the kidneys begin to generate *qi* during the *zi* hour, when also the body's meridian flow centers on the kidney and bladder channels. At this time, the rhythms of heaven combine with the flow of the meridians, vessels and organs: this is aligned midnight. In other words, the kidneys and bladder form a triangular junction, where around 11 p.m. proper kidney *qi* rises. As it begins to rise, the kidney meridians start to flow and the kidneys change their *qi*. The kidneys generate *qi* right at midnight, when the internal organs, meridians and rhythms of heaven combine in harmony.

In ordinary people, the rhythm of the meridians and internal organs is not standardized but differs from person to person and within the individual. Nor does it match the rhythm of heaven. For example, the *mao* hour (5-7 a.m.) is when the liver is active. At this time, guide the *qi* through the liver meridian. But only very few people get the liver meridian to flow when the liver is active. Most people either rush ahead or fall behind. That is to say, around midnight, in them the kidneys and their meridians have already completed their *qi* transformation and their *qi* starts to flow from them to other internal organs. This is they are rushing ahead. Traditional Chinese medicine calls this syndrome a release of an excessive amount of yang. People who have it tend to be impatient and irritable, since the energy flow in their meridians and internal organs is ahead of time and does not match the rhythm of heaven. If the meridians lag behind, moreover, the internal organs do so as well. People with this condition tend to be inactive, pessimistic and failing. Practice can change this situation. If the *qi* rushes ahead, try to pull it back when you sit at midnight, stabilizing it with inner observation.

The method relies on the fact that the kidneys are more active during midnight, but make sure to also look whether the liver or heart, the spleen or stomach are active. As long as there is activity, you can tell whether it is ahead or delayed. If it is ahead, find a way to make it stop, keep the breathing steady and slow down, let it be late and pull it back. If it is delayed, keep the breathing faster so it can catch up quickly. The breathing here is not breathing through the nose and mouth, but internal. (Hold the breath and see if you can use the internal *qi* to activate the lower field.) Let the internal *qi* push the internal organs to get active, then quickly guide it upward, letting it move slowly, then pull it back. If you cannot see the internal organs, it is hard; if you cannot tell the spaces apart, it is very difficult.

In the human body, the kidneys generate *qi* around midnight. Raise this *qi* up and within two hours transform all of it. This is called the unity of heaven and humanity. Midnight practice comes with a complete set of methods that Daoists rarely share with others and that work in accordance with the firing process signaled by the twelve systematic hexagrams that match the twelve double-hours. Among the hexagrams, midnight consists of one yang line at the bottom plus five yin lines at the top. At this time, do not activate *qi*. At the end the *hai* hour (9-11 p.m.), energy is born into the Fu hexagram, which consists of all yin lines, clearly showing that the yang *qi* is gone.

It takes ordinary people a long time to make the transition and to avoid missing the key moment when yang *qi* first arises, it is best to prepare for midnight practice early, toward the end of the *hai* hour. That is, start meditating around 10 p.m. Since this is just about the middle of the *hai* hour, you have 30 to 40 minutes to steady yourself, ideally by reflecting on what you have done all day. After an hour, the *zi* hour starts and yang rises. The moment you feel it, begin to guide the *qi*. As you inhale, guide it down past the navel; as you exhale,

let it rise up but not above the heart. As you inhale again and guide it down beyond the navel, let it reach the lower field and focus it in the lower abdomen. As you exhale, release it. On your next inhale, as the *qi* sinks down beyond the navel and reaches the lower field, strongly focus it in the lower abdomen and notice how it starts to be active.

At this time, hold the breath for a moment, then guide it again. During the midnight hour, from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m., it will move about spontaneously and there is no need to silently circulate it through the five phases. To conclude, circulate it back to the Heavenly Net, flowing it up through the Conception and Governing Vessels. If you feel strong desire, divert the energy flow. If you cannot divert it, guide it all over again.

Midnight practice centers on finding one drop of perfect yang. The first step is to find this in the Meeting Yin point area: this is easy. Practice looking inside and inner observation, moving down bit by bit until you reach the bottom, then again look up at the top of the head as you inhale and raise the *qi* upward. Sitting at midnight is not the same as midnight practice. If you just sit at midnight as usual, it does not make any difference, because it is just regular practice. Midnight practice is a special form of sitting at midnight, which centers on raising one drop of perfect yang from the Meeting Yin point area into the lower field.

The Meeting Yin point is the area of greatest yin in the body. If you raise it up, you access yang within yin. One drop of perfect yang here means the tiny amount of perfect yang extracted from the Meeting Yin point at the bottom of the pelvic floor as it is moved up into the lower field. Various works on healing exercises assert that the Meeting Yin area is the lowest point, bottom most part and extreme yin spot of the body. There is one drop of perfect yang, but you have to raise it up to the lower field and nourish it. So, sitting at midnight, midnight practice and working with living midnight energy have different connotations: their cultivation and refinement methods are not the same.

Chapter Twenty

Essential Methods of Women's Alchemy

"Essential Methods of Women's Alchemy" is the title of a text, the *Nüdan xinfa*. It describes Daoist methods of internal cultivation for women as transmitted by myself, the 18th generation Dragon Gate master Wang Liping. A secret Daoist practice for women, this appears as an important part in the *Neigong shu*, representing the middle and upper vehicle of women's cultivation. The first part of the text comes from the *Lingbao bifa*, its second part goes back to the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi*. Both combine to form this work. After the publication of the *Lingbao bifa*, the cultivation of internal alchemy was formally organized into lineages, notably of Daoist monks. It has a long history, transmitted to the present day in different documents.

In addition, there are also books recording the works of Daoist nuns, including notably Cao Wenyi's *Lingyuan dadao ge* (Song of the Great Dao of the Numinous Source), Sun Bu'er's *Yuanjun fayu* (Goddess Lectures), *Nügong neidan cidi shi* (Poems on Women's Internal Alchemy) and *Nüdan zhenjue* (Secrets of Women's Alchemy), about ten works in all.

The complete cultivation methods for women are unique and hard to find. Modern texts like the *Xiwangmu nüxiu zhengtu shize* (Ten Principles on the Right Way of Women's Cultivation by the Queen Mother of the West) and the *Niwan Li zushi nüzong shuangxiu baofa* (Patriarch Li Niwan's Precious Raft for Women's Dual Cultivation), although based on the Northern School of Daoism and containing a few methods, are incomplete. They do not offer clear explanations and direct guidance of a teacher, so that people do not know where to start or how to practice.

Most commonly, in society today some methods are transmitted that claim to be good for both men and women, without making any distinctions. In fact, they only know men's practices and have no clue about what women should do. If women practice in this manner over a long period time, they may very well do harm to the body, which has led to issues that have aroused concern among knowledgeable people. The essential methods for women cultivating perfection, although transmitted for millennia has been lost almost entirely today. Now, however, we can make it public for the whole world to see. This is a great blessing for women's cultivation, signifying a major event in Daoist culture.

Although the *Nüdan xinfa* is a classic of cultivating Dao, it also applies to modern life. Theories and practical experiences of the ancients can be well integrated into modern life. As they practice, people today can increasingly understand the relationship and mysteries between the human body and nature, expand the full development and use of the body's hidden potential and serve the harmony of human society and the progress of human civilization.

I taught this method to a group of five people in Dalian, June 20 to July 10, 2003. The five participants feel that they benefited so much that they are not willing to keep the technique to themselves. Rather, they impart the contents of this teaching with anyone on the same path. (For a complete content of the *Nüdan xinfa*, please see the official publication.)

Their presentation, then, consists of five combined essays, created through the cooperation of five co-authors, who each have been practicing for over ten years, with deep commitment to Daoist methods and culture. They include the following female disciples:

Tong Min	Wife of Master Wang Liping
Shang Yan	Retired Manager of Liaoning Educational Institute
Zhao Dezhi	Retired Employee of Shenyang Dadong District Housing Management Substitutes
Liu Yurong	Retired Employee of Shenyang Sanlong Company
Zhao Guirong	Retired Manager of Shenyang Fire Research Institute

The original work as contained in the *Lingbao bifa* presents methods of women's cultivation. Once a women has completed the first three steps of attracting immortality, the way of attaining wisdom and potential, and the first three steps of the practice of the Three Immortals, she can start to practice women's alchemy, the great method of cultivating perfection, a unique training for women. The work involves ten methods and proceeds in fourteen steps.

1. Observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal
2. Repairing the channels
3. Decapitating the red dragon
4. Reversing the menstrual flow
5. (Sexual) cultivation according to the Plain Woman
6. Massaging the breasts to recover youth

7A. Setting up the cauldron and developing the embryo

7B. Creating the liquid and concocting the elixir

8. Silently practicing embryo respiration
9. Refining the yang spirit
10. Completing yang spirit light

Here we only teach the first two steps of the first method.

Observing the Heart-and-Mind through the Mother of Metal

The hand gesture for this involves having both hands raised up, keeping the Labor Palace (Laogong, PC8) point in the center of the palm facing Milk Flow (Ruxi, CV17) in the middle of the chest. The arms and hands seem to be holding a ball; shoulders, elbows, wrists, and fingers are relaxed—the more relaxed and the looser the better. Ideally relax them without exerting any force, even into the armpit.

During practice, intention should be focused on the Milk Flow point, located between the nipples, which is a critical energy center for women's cultivation. Women belong to the principle of earth, forming part of yin. Thus, while men cultivate *qi,* women cultivate blood. All male practice has its foundation in the Ocean of *Qi,* i.e., the lower field; all female practices centers on the Ocean of Blood, i. e., the Milk Flow point, also known as the upper cauldron, one of three cauldrons important in women's cultivation of perfection. The main energy center for women's practice, it is always called Milk Flow in works on internal alchemy, alternatively named the upper cauldron.

To observe the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal, you must be diligent and careful, making sure spirit and the life force are united. If they are separate and the life force flees, you meditate in vain, unable to feel any sensations within. This is this key to successful and skillful practice, best undertaken at night when there is no sound. This section presents the foundation of the essential cultivation of women's alchemy. It all starts here, whether women refine the form and body, enhance the uterus, control the pelvis, or opens the Conception Vessel.

To start, first fully understand the physiological structure of the human body. Then, when sitting in meditation, begin by thinking about the breasts, the Milk Flow point, the lower field, the navel, the large cauldron, the two valleys, as well as other parts, then start the actual practice.

Step One

Just as in the practice of calming spirit at the Ancestral Opening, move the intention into the lower field and see what goes on there. When there is movement in the lower field, turn both palms up, use the external to guide the internal, exhale and raise the *qi* from the lower field into the Milk Flow point. Next, turn the palms inward, pull them toward the body and inhale, making the hand gesture of observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal. Again adjust our body and posture, making sure that shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and fingers are relaxed, then sit quietly for a while. Observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal entails all intention being on the Milk Flow point. Keep looking at what is happening here as well as in the lower field, in the breasts and in the big cauldron of the uterus to see if there is anything going on.

When these areas are cold, hot, bloated, or agitated, exhale and gently press your hands inward. Once they get close to the Milk Flow point, turn your palms down, inhale and push the *qi* down from the Milk Flow area into the lower field. Next, turn the palms up, exhale and raise the *qi* from the lower field into the Milk Flow area. Keep on doing this, moving from Milk Flow to the lower field and back. Repeat for 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 times, depending on what goes on within.

When pushing the *qi* down from the Milk Flow point to the lower field and raising it up again, as you keep raising and pushing down, if you feel very comfortable, the big cauldron of the uterus or the front genital may become noticeable. In that case, immediately turn the palms down, inhale and push the *qi* down from the Milk Flow point into the lower field. Next focus in the lower abdomen, focus all force in the lower field, inhale again and move the *qi* down from the lower field into the big cauldron. Contract the lower abdomen once more and focus all force on the big cauldron. (Note: Contract the lower abdomen twice.) Next, turn the palms up, exhale and raise the *qi* from the big cauldron into the lower field while releasing all force and tension from it. Exhale again, rising *qi* into the Milk Flow point. In other words, *qi* moves from the Milk Flow point into the lower field and from there into the big cauldron; then it moves from the big cauldron into the lower field and from there back into the Milk Flow field. Repeat 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 times, depending on what goes on within.

Lastly, return to the Milk Flow point, turn the palms inward and move them away from the body. Inhale and form the hand gesture of observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal. Again adjust your posture, making sure the shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and fingers are relaxed. Sit quietly for a while.

Now, form the hand gesture of observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal and continue with refining the meridians. To concentrate your efforts, exhale and exert inward pressure. When you get close to the Milk Flow point, turn the palms down, inhale and push the *qi* down from the Milk Flow point into the lower field. Let both hands form the hand gesture of heaven, earth, and humanity, sit quietly in meditation and cleanse the body. Never mind where the *qi* goes in the body, never mind whether the body is cold or hot, just do not move. As you sit like this for a while, you can enter into a state that feels quite comfortable. If you feel sleepy during the meditation, just go to bed. There is no need to conclude the practice formally, just going to sleep is fine.

Step Two

After practicing calming spirit at the Ancestral Opening several times, if the lower field still does not have any sensations, or you are a beginner, you can move directly to step two of observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal, known as "two swallows flying, fire pressure circulates metal". Here,

as you silently circulate the five phases, raise the *qi* from the big cauldron into the lower field, then push it from there into the bladder and start circulating. As you activate to transform the five phases, the *qi* of the heart does not go into spleen and stomach, but moves from the Milk Flow area into the lungs. This this is the method of using fire pressure to circulate metal, stealing different aspects of husband and wife. Some also call it collecting the small medicine and sealing the stove; yet others say it is extending life and returning to the source. Either way, it is the key to cultivation and refinement for women.

This step particularly emphasizes to use the heel to press against the yin area or use a towel to seal the lower three yin orifices. Either method serves to seal the "two wings of the iron gate".

If the lower field does not have any sensations, slowly and gently raise both hands, turn the palms up, exhale and raise the *qi* from the lower field into the Milk Flow area. Then, turn the palms toward the body, pull them away and inhale. Next, form the hand gesture of observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal and sit in quiet meditation for a while. Again adjust your posture, making sure that shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and fingers are relaxed. Exhale, gently press both hands in. When they are close to the Milk Flow point, turn the palms down, inhale and move the *qi* from here into the lower field as you slightly focus in the lower abdomen. Turn the palms up, exhale and raise the *qi* from the lower field into the Milk Flow area. Move it back and forth: from Milk Flow to lower field, from lower field to Milk Flow. Repeat 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 times.

Lastly, move the *qi* from the lower field into the Milk Flow area and hold the intention there for a short while. Turn the palms down, exhale and push the *qi* down from the Milk Flow area into the lower field while slightly contracting the lower abdomen. Next, inhale and move the *qi* into the big cauldron. Once it is there, place your hands at the root of the thighs on the hip and exerts pressure on the two meridians there as you feel the breath in the big cauldron area (exhale). Inhale and let four fingers of each hand slowly move up, raising the *qi* from the big cauldron into the lower field. Exhale, keeping the thumbs of each hand pointing down and push the *qi* down from the lower field into the big cauldron. Keep it moving: from the big cauldron into the lower field, the lower field into the big cauldron. Repeat 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 times.

After this, start to circulate the *qi* through the organs associated with the five phases. Place both hands on top of each other at the big cauldron, inhale and raise the *qi* from the big cauldron into the lower field. Exhale and push it down from the lower field into the bladder in a smooth motion. Pull it into the bladder and move it forward as you inhale, then press in and exhale. Inhale and raise the *qi* from the bladder into the liver in a smooth motion. Pull it into the liver and move it forward as you inhale, then press in and exhale. Again inhale, raise the *qi* from the liver into the heart in a smooth motion. Pull it into the heart and move it forward as you inhale, then press in and exhale. Inhale again,

move the *qi* from the heart to the Milk Flow point and from there into the lungs. Your hands move swiftly, looking like a pair of swallows about to fly off, passing over the lungs and breasts in a smooth motion.

Throughout, it is important that you keep your back straight, elbows raised above the shoulders, raised up but not too high. Also, arms and elbows should be as far back as possible, contracting the back, the scapulae together. This is known as "two swallows flying, fire pressure circulates metal", stealing different aspects of husband and wife. Next, exhale and push the *qi* down from the lungs into the kidneys in a smooth motion. Pull it into the kidneys and move it forward as you inhale, then press in and exhale. From here, push the *qi* down from the kidneys into the bladder in a smooth motion. Pull it into the bladder and move it forward as you inhale, then press in and exhale. From the bladder, the *qi* moves again into liver, heart, lungs, kidneys and once more returns to the bladder. This is one cycle. Repeat 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 times.

At this time, your hands should be on top of each other covering the bladder. Inhale and raise the *qi* from the bladder into the lower field. Exhale and push it down from there into the big cauldron. Both hands stop at the root of the thighs on the hip and exerts pressure on the two meridians there. Inhale and have four fingers of each hand slowly move up, as you raise the *qi* from the big cauldron into the lower field. Exhale and let the thumbs of each hand slowly move down, as you push the *qi* down from the lower field into the big cauldron. Move it from the big cauldron into the lower field and from the lower field into the big cauldron. Repeat 3, 6, 12, 24, or 36 times.

Hold both hands on top of each other at the big cauldron and focus the breath here (inhale). Turn the palms up, exhale and raise the *qi* from the big cauldron into the Milk Flow area. Turn the palms inward and push them forward inhaling, then form the hand gesture of observing the heart-and-mind through the mother of metal. Again adjust your posture to make sure shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, and fingers are relaxed. Sit quietly in meditation for a while.

At this point, everyone will have sensations. From here, continue with the momentum, refining meridians and using other methods. To conclude, exhale, inhale to press both hands inward and exhale again. As you get close to the Milk Flow area, turn the palms down and inhale into the lower field. Form the hand gesture of heaven, earth, and humanity. Sit quietly in meditation and cleanse the body. Continue the cleansing as long as you can, the longer the better. This concludes the practice. Once you have mastered this method, your wisdom, memory and intelligence will improve greatly. You will be able to discriminate numerous things, your eyes bright and piercing. This completes the first two steps of the first method.

Note: During practice, unmarried and women who have not given birth yet should not touch the big cauldron.

Chapter Twenty-One

The Practice of the Three Immortals

The *Lingbao bifa* contains a preface by Zhongli Quan. He says,

> Dao cannot be explained or transmitted, named or recorded. Despite this, ever since high antiquity there have been quite a few who ascended to immortality and attained Dao. In my will, I bowed down to wise forefathers and in my heart embraced the Great Dao. Without meaning to do so, I came to raise swords and got involved with the military: the times were dangerous, and the world was in disorder.
>
> Eventually I had to flee for my life, obscuring my traces among rivers, lakes, cliffs, and valleys. Once I was far enough away, I began to understand my inner nature and rested my heart, dedicating myself solely to clarity and purity, the invisible and inaudible. I read through numerous scriptures on elixirs, continuously asked advice from my friends in Dao and pursued the minute details of how to stop words and nourish life, the great, inexplicable Dao of perfect immortality.
>
> When I lived in a rocky cave in the Zhongnan mountains, I received thirty scrolls of Numinous Treasure scriptures [in revelation]. Their first section, entitled *Jin'gao shu* (Book of Golden Declarations), was presented by [the Heavenly Venerable of] Primordial Beginning; their middle section, called *Yushu lu* (Records Written in Jade), was narrated by the Primordial Emperor [Lord of the Dao]; their last section, named *Zhenyuan yi* (Explanation of the Source of Perfection), was transmitted by the Highest Lord [Lao]. Altogether, they consisted of several thousand words.
>
> I put on my clothes before dawn and ate after dusk [i.e., worked diligently], all the while pondering them widely and reflecting on them in great depth. Eventually I came to realize that there is yang within yin and yin within yang, which represents the basic order of the up and down movement of heaven and earth; that energy generates water and water generates energy, which represents the principle of the mutual interaction of heart and kidneys. They are expressed in concrete things and images, showing that Dao that is never far from humanity.
>
> Mating and harmonizing them in the rhythm of the heavenly stems like *jia* and *geng*, I came to experience the standard of the golden elixir; re-

ducing and enhancing them based on the pattern of the earthly branches like *mao* and *you*, I followed the natural firing process without fail. Penetrating the bottom with red lead and black mercury I failed to complete the great medicine, but when I guided the golden and jade fluids to the top, I finally achieved elixir circulation.

Moving [the *qi*] from nonbeing into being, I constantly maintained the heart of a valiant warrior; raising it from bottom to top, I gradually entered the realm of the invisible and inaudible. Reducing lead and increasing mercury, I managed to dissolve the two and eight yin; renewing my bones and refining my physical form, I made the three and nine yang grow tall. I discerned whether the water source was clear or turbid at the time I practiced full immersion; I recognized whether the inner scenery was perfect or fleeting on the days I sat in oblivion.

I found the obscure instructions of the mysterious pivot hard to express in physical form and written works, yet I was able to use the wondrous principles of Numinous Treasure to enter the ranks of the sages and transcend the ordinary. Presenting the combined methods of the Three Vehicles, I call this work *Lingbao bifa*, "The Conclusive Methods of Numinous Treasure." These sagely words of the great Dao I dare not keep to myself only, but transmit to my disciple Lü Dongbin. May he not keep secrets in completing Dao, but hand it down to adepts of generations to come.

Respectfully submitted by Zhongli Quan, courtesy name Yunfang, Perfected of Upright Yang.

The practice of the Three Immortals, then, represents the training method of the *Lingbao bifa*. Lü Dongbin passed it on to Wang Chongyang, who in turn gave it to Qiu Chuji. Master Chongyang renamed it as found in the *Lingbao bifa* method and called it the practice of the Three Immortals. The entire system is part of the Dragon Gate lineage, which descends from the Five Northern Patriarchs of Complete Perfection.

Through this training the human body is united with the heavenly body and the postnatal is combined with the prenatal. It divides into three vehicles, ten methods and forty-five sections. Each section should be practiced in the proper order: retreat to wall-gazing for nine years, complete it in the tenth year, followed by internal cleansing for two years. The practice of the Three Immortals includes the levels of human, earthly, and heavenly immortals.

Human immortal practice uses the body as a furnace, *qi* as the key ingredient, the heart-and-mind as fire and the kidneys as water. The process works through nine reversions and seven returns, during which the trigrams Kan and Li conjoin and elixir circulation based on the golden fluid emerges.

Earth immortal practice uses spirit as furnace, *qi* as the key ingredient, the sun as fire and the moon as water. It involves diving deep into the sea to search

for treasure and fly high through the air to gaze at the moon, greatly uniting yin and yang.

Heavenly immortal practice uses spirit as furnace, inner nature as the key ingredient, wisdom as fire and the body as water. It means maintaining the nine palaces as indestructible, Qian and Kun [heaven and earth] constantly transmuting and humanity and heaven transforming together.

The *Lingbao bifa* contains a concrete outline of Daoist cultivation practices. Its subtle and complex techniques have to be taught by a knowledgeable master in oral transmission. More specifically, the methods that form the practice of the Three Immortals consist of the following.

The lesser vehicle consists of four methods that bring peace and happiness as well as an extension of life. They are the immortality practice on the human level.

I. Pairing yin and yang
   1. Exchange yin and yang—Yin-yang embryo respiration
   2. Pair yin and yang—Perfect embryo respiration
   3. Circulate yin and yang—Join the trigrams Kan and Li

II. Coagulating and dispersing water and fire
   1. Harbor perfect *qi* in great Oneness
   2. Lesser refinement of the physical form
   3. Heavenly lad and heavenly grandmother

III. Mating of dragon and tiger
   1. Collect, repair, and circulate the elixir
   2. Nurture the immortal embryo
   3. Harmonize water and fire
   4. See the meeting of perfect husband and wife
   5. Let *qi* interact, while the form stays stable

IV. Concoction and refinement of the elixir
   1. The firing process
   2. The small heavenly circuit
   3. The firing process of the heavenly circuit
   4. Concentrate spirit and nurture *qi*
   5. Concentrate *qi* and nurture spirit
   6. Refine yang and nurture spirit

The middle vehicle consists of three methods that lead to long life and no death. They are the earth immortal practices.

V. Flying the gold crystal from behind the elbowss
1. Reverting essence to nourish the brain
2. Starting the River Carriaget
3. Mating of dragon and tiger
4. Reducing lead and augmenting mercury
5. Recovering youthful vitality

VI. Elixir circulation based on jade fluid
1. The jade fluid talisman for refining the physical form
2. Cleansing the immortal embryo
3. Minor elixir circulation
4. Major elixir circulation
5. Nine-based elixir circulation

VII. Elixir circulation based on golden fluid
1. The golden fluid talisman for refining the physical form
2. Raising the fire and incinerating the body
3. Golden flower and jade dew
4. The great merging
5. The method of yellow and white

The great vehicle consists of three methods of transcending the ordinary and entering the sacred. They are the heavenly immortal practices.

VIII. Moving toward the prime and refining *qi*
1. Transcend the internal courtyard
2. Refine *qi* to perfect the physical form
3. The purple golden elixir
4. Burn the yang spirit
5. Grow three flowers at the Crown Gate

IX. Internal observation and exchange
1. Gather yang spirit
2. Blaze heavenly fire
3. Exchange the mundane for immortality
4. Paradise in the world and in heaven

X. Transcending and shedding the physical form
1. Enter and exit the physical form
2. Shed the body as a spirit immortal
3. Transcend the ordinary and enter the sacred

Here we introduce only the training methods first three sections.

Exchange Yin and Yang

Practitioners use attracting immortality to steady body, breath and heart. First, wait for the body and heart to become extremely still. When intention and *qi* fuse, you can start to practice the exchange of yin and yang:

As you inhale, let the primordial *qi* of the celestial universe press from all four sides and eight directions into all the pores of the body universe.

As you exhale, let the pores of the body universe radiate the *qi* outward in all four sides and eight directions toward the celestial universe.

Make sure your breathing is to be even, deep, subtle and long. The best interval for successive inhalation and exhalation is one minute, which is very slow. The *Lingbao bifa* requires that you first refine the breath: do it 6,000 times. (Successive inhalation and exhalation count as one time). The above-mentioned breathing method requires you to inhale *qi* into the area below the navel and exhale it back up but never go beyond than the heart. This constitutes the general breathing principles for all immortality practice on the human level.

Pair Yin and Yang

Practitioners who have successfully mastered the exchange of yin and yang can proceed to pairing yin and yang.

As you inhale, let the primordial *qi* of the celestial universe press from all four sides and eight directions into all the pores of the body universe.

As you exhale, let the pores of the body universe radiate the *qi* outward in all four sides and eight directions toward the celestial universe. Make sure your breathing is even, deep, fine and long.

Circulate Yin and Yang

Practitioners who have successfully mastered pairing yin and yang can proceed to return yin and yang. To do so, sit in meditation and curl your hands into fists around the thumbs, then place them on your knees. Use the methods of attracting immortality to steady body, breath and heart. Subsequently, match the breathing with the following pattern: inhale—hold the breath in—exhale—hold the breath out—and repeat, always making sure your breathing is even, deep, fine and long:

As you inhale, let the primordial *qi* of the celestial universe press from all four sides and eight directions into all the pores of the body universe. Hold the breath in: After breathing primordial, prenatal *qi,* neither inhale nor exhale, just hold it. First gather your intention in the lower field and, if you have already acquired this skill, silently circulate it through the five phases. The sequence of the flow is: lower field—bladder—liver—heart—stomach—lungs—kidneys—lower field.

As you exhale, let the *qi* from the lower field and the five organs transform, using the pores of the entire body. Prenatal and postnatal *qi* combine as you do so.

Glossary

Ancestral Orifice 祖窍 *Zǔqiào* – Located on the inner nature line in front of the head at the level of the Heavenly Eye point (third eye). Calming spirit at the Ancestral Orifice causes original energy to encase cosmic energy, by gathering it into the smallest unit and allowing it to be recovered and stored within the body. In addition calming the spirit at this place helps us find our heavenly nature.

Awareness 意识 *Yìshí* – A part of consciousness that is used to be aware of both internal and external phenomena.

Base *Qi* 氣 Qì – This is cosmic energy, also known as the primordial *qi* of heaven. This is what you breathe into the body.

Body 身 *Shēn* – The physical body.

Body Universe 身宇宙 *Shēn yǔzhòu* – The sum total of oneself, separate and yet contained within the greater heavenly universe. Its edges are the end of the *qi* field located with outstretched hands. It is a prime goal to develop a sense of your body universe in all its facets such that you can operate both internal and external operations.

Broken Line 断线 *Duànxiàn* – This refers to the connecting line between the Heavenly or Crown Gate and the front genitalia.

Canopy of Heavenly Force 天灵盖 *Tiānlíng gài* – Also known as the Heavenly Gate, this is the topmost part of the Broken Line.

Cavern Chamber 洞房 *Dòngfáng* – Located on the inner nature line, this is two inches (*cun*) from the Heavenly Eye Point.

Cauldron 鼎 *Dǐng* – A a large pot with three legs and a lid used for cooking over a fire. Internally, it is located in the lower field; here the medicine is cooked. In ancient times, internal alchemy imitated external alchemy, while external alchemy shed light on internal alchemy. The core concept of internal alchemy is that transformation takes place internally, but the way it is practiced follows the methods of external elixir concoction. That is to say, as adepts apply external methods to the body, the body becomes a furnace, which contains a cauldron in the lower field.

Central Vessel 中脉线 *Zhōngmài xiàn* – This indicates the connection between the Hundred Meeting (Baihui; GV20) point at the top of the head and the Meeting Yin (Huiyin; CV1) point at the perineum. It is the body's *Zuwu* line. In medicine, it is called the Thrusting Vessel.

Coagulate 聚 *Jù* – Changing a liquid into a solid or semisolid state. Daoists believe that people have three energies coagulating in the body: original,

transmitted or inherited, and cosmic. These three are not fixed; they can convert into each other.

Color 色 *Sè* – Color signifies the outermost layer, apparent in people's complexion, appearance, and countenance. The relationship between spirit and form manifests in the *qi,* often described in terms of being sufficient or insufficient. However, this quality of *qi* is not what you think but appears in a halo around the body. Everyone is aware of this, but only few people can see its colors (aura).

Conscious Spirit 识神 *Shìshén* – Conscious spirit is understood in a straightforward manner by all teachers and patriarchs. It plays only a minor role, moving about in the worldly sphere, matching time and space, going along with moods and temperaments. It manifests in the seven emotions and six desires. It can move both outside and within the body, can be at top or bottom, and can determine the track of sun and moon. It manifests most intensely at the sense doors (eye, ears, nose, and mouth) known as the "gateways" (spirit openings).

Cosmic Energy 宇宙能量 *Yǔzhòu néngliàng* – Energy of the three higher realms of universe, time and space. Human beings gain their energy from the universe, defined in Daoism as any place that occupies space.

Cosmic *Qi* 氣 *Qì* – The *qi* of nature and heaven, of the source and origin of all. Formless, it does not follow regular patterns and has no fixed path of movement. Everyone (including corpses and cremains) inhales and exhales this *qi* of the universe, matching the respiration of nature.

Crescent Moon Stove 偃月炉 *Yǎnyuè lú* – Another name for the lower field, located between navel and kidneys.

Crown Gate 顶门 *Dǐngmén* – the exit gate on the broken line, located directly above above the Niwan at the top of the head.

Destiny-Cultivation Line 修命线 *Xiūmìng xiàn* – This is the connecting line between the Ocean of *Qi* and the sacrum, located 1.2-1.5 inches below the navel.

Destiny-Protection Line 保命线 *Bǎomìng xiàn* – This begins at the navel and passes through the center of the body to the Gate of Life.

Earthly Branches – 5-7a.m. 卯 *Mǎo*, 11a.m. - 1p.m. 午 *Wǔ,* 5-7p.m. 酉 *Yǒu*, 11p.m. - 1a.m. 子 *Zi*. The earth completes one rotation in one day. The human body matches the earth, making it possible to cultivate yin and yang, water and fire, and open the heavenly circuit as it passes through the *mao* (5-7 a.m.) and *you* hours (5-7 p.m.).

Earth Cauldron 土釜 *Tǔfǔ* – Alnother name for the middle field.

Elixir 丹 *Dān* – Literally, cinnabar; the medicine that one produces after undergoing an internal alchemical process.

Elusive Life Force 虚灵 *Xūlíng* – Not inside the body, but outside, appearing and disappearing in front of our eyes.

Essence 精 *Jīng* – The physical essence of the body, material and yin in nature.

Five Phases 五行 *Wǔxíng* – A theory of traditional China that describes the interrelationship between five types of *qi*: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. In the context of internal alchemy, it describes the interrelationship between the five organs: liver, heart, spleen, lungs, and kidneys.

Fire *Qi* 氖 *Qi* –A gas discharged from the body. It has light and heat, just like the body's energy flow with its particles. People can see it when it is discharged; it can also be emitted intentionally to produce an electromagnetic wave, which in turn forms a magnetic field effective in healing.

Flowery Pond 华池 *Huáchí* – Anoterh name for the lower field.

Focus 收 *Shōu* – Additional translations are to receive, collect, or contract. This is used in sentences such as focus the mind, heart, body, and spirit light. The idea is to use a magnetic quality of pulling in toward the middle, such as iin compression. For example, focusing the mind means to gather in all the mind consciousness from outside to inside. The force that promotes the movement uses intention and very little concentration. Moving from outside to inside using a magnetic force that exists inside the human body is an experiential explanation.

Form 形 *Xíng* – That which is between Dao and matter. It is not the body but is a vessel for spirit and essence to reside it. It is not a principle but takes shape and emerges from being. Form decays over life. One can nourish form to refine essence. It is one of the transformation from *qi* to form to matter.[1]

Furnace 炉 *Lú* – In immortality practice, the body is the furnace; on the level of immortality of heaven and earth, spirit is the furnace. It is a space where heat is generated using wind from the outside. There are many ways to set up the furnace, for example, by first making sure the ground is flat and even, then erect an alchemical furnace with eight openings.

Gate of Destiny 命门 *Mìngmén* – Also known as the Gate of Life at acupuncture point DU4.

Golden Bridge 金桥 *Jīnqiáo* – Also known as the Upper Magpie Bridge, this is located underneath the space between the eyebrows and above the palate in the mouth. Inside the nostrils, there are two openings that are hidden and secret. One is empty, the other is full. The full or strong opening leads to the road of internal *qi* cultivation, while at the other energy easily leaks out.

Halfmoon Spheres 两弦 *Liǎngxián* – A term that refers to the upper and lower cavities (cranial cavity and abdomen) and comes from practices in the *Xiuzhen tu* related to lunar phases.

Heart-and-Mind 心 *Xīn* – Can mean either the physical organ or the mind. In the *Shouwen jiezi*, a 2nd century Han dictionary, the character looks like the physical heart:

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[1] An excellent analysis of Form can be found by Pregadio Fabrizio, "The Notion of 'Form' and the Ways of Liberation in Daoism." *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 14 (2004), 95-130.



Heavenly Gate 天门 *Tiānmén* – At the topmost part of the broken line, the acupuncture point *Shenting* DU24, three inches above the Niwan. This area is also known as the inner nature area or the area of life force. Found and established in the upper elixir field, it opens upward to form a gateway to heaven.

Heavenly Eye 天目 *Tiānmù* – Located between the eyebrows, also known as the third eye. The Heavenly Eye looks like a single entity, but in fact it has three openings. Originally known as the Heavenly Heart, its name was changed by the immortal Lü. It closely matches the heavenly bodies of sun, moon, and stars. Old texts on secret elixir methods commonly represent it with three dots.

Heavenly Nature 天性 *Tiānxìng* – The innate qualities or temperament a person is born with.

Heavenly Net 天罡 *Tiāngāng* – The heavenly bodies in the sky. The sun and moon are the left and right eyes, while the stars refer to the Northern Dipper, also known as the Heavenly Net and the Heavenly Stems.

Hundred Meeting 百会 *Bǎihuì* –The acupuncture point DU20 at the top of the head.

Inner Nature 性 *Xìng* – One's true being, including the small consciousness one lives in. It is the timeless quality that does not change, the original mind or heart.

Inner Nature Line 性线 *Xìngxiàn* – This connects the Heavenly Eye at the eyebrows with the Jade Pillow in the back of the head. Its opening leads outside, but the eye is within and heaven forms its internal structure.

Intention 意 *Yì* – Also translated using words like thought and idea. When using the intention to initiate an operation, you are using the mind but not with too much power, which would lead to grasping. It is a function of the mind only. Typically people's intention is not concentrated. They cannot unify their breathing, walking, and thinking into oneness. Their mind, spirit, intention, and *qi* within the body universe cannot maintain integrated unity and are not aligned in harmony. The interchange of cosmic and stem *qi* between their body and the heavenly universe does not follow any rules. Spirit or *qi* have neither shape nor intention. Thus, we say that their mind is scattered and their spirit far off., the *qi* of their body universe keeps going out and tends to stay separate. You can fruitfully apply your mind, spirit, *qi,* and intention so your body and the heavenly universe synchronize.

Internal Alchemy 内功 *Nèigōng* – Refining and cultivating the human body universe in order to upgrade one's existence. One uses instructions to

perform operations or procedures that transform raw materials such as essence, *qi* and spirit into peak functionality.

Jade Pillow 玉枕 *Yùzhěn* – Located at the back of the head on the inner nature line, directly opposite the Heavenly Eye.

Large Cauldron 大鼎 *Dàding* – The uterus, used for procedures in women's alchemy.

Large Heavenly Circuit 大周天 *Dàzhōu tiān* – Daoists had an early theory about the heavenly circuit: when the earth revolves around the sun once, it completes one heavenly circuit, which takes one year. The human body matches the sun, making it possible to open all fourteen vessels and meridians. This is called the large heavenly circuit (also called the macrocosmic orbit).

Life-destiny 命 *Mìng* – Refers to two ideas: one's fate in life and one's life expectancy. In the first sense it can be understood as something to fulfill or actualize in life. In the second it can relate to an increase in longevity.[2]

Life Force 灵 *Líng* – Commonly translated as "numen." In this book it is translated to denote animal vitality.

Lower Field 下田 *Xiàtián* – The lower field is called the Flowery Pond, yet another cavity of emptiness, with a circumference of 1.2 inches. Here essence is stored and the medicine is collected, typically at low pressure. Located between navel and kidneys, this 1.2 inch spot it also called Crescent Moon Furnace or the Ocean of *Qi*—different from the Cavity of *Qi*.

Magical Arts 法术 *Fǎshù* – The nine methods of fundamental practice in antiquity were called magical arts. Master Wang thinks that "magical" here means just a special kind of cultivation, while the term "arts" refers to particular skills. The first four methods are about helping people to attain happiness and making people obey; the remaining five are about controlling others.

Magpie Bridge 鹊桥 *Quèqiáo* – There are two connection points in the body called Magpie Bridge. The upper one is located in the mouth: use the tongue to touch the upper palate to create a connection between the Governing and Conception vessels. The lower one is located in the rear genital area: seal it by sitting on the perineum.

Material Soul 魄 *Pò* – The lungs house the material soul. Yin in nature, it, consists of heavy and turbid *qi* and is attached to the physical body. It looks towards death.

Meeting Yin 会阴穴 *Huìyīn xué* – An acupuncture point located at the perineum at REN1.

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[2] For a more detailed look at destiny, see Fabrizio Pregadio, "Destiny, Vital Force, or Existence? On the Meanings of *Ming* in Daoist Internal Alchemy and Its Relation to *Xing* or Human Nature." *Daoism: Religion, History and Society* 6 (2014), 157-218.

Middle Field 中田 *Zhōngtián* – Also called Earth Cauldron or Yellow Court, this is a cavity of emptiness, with a circumference of 1.2 inches. Here *qi* is stored. It is the cauldron where the elixir is concocted.

Minor Elixir Circulation 小还丹 *Xiǎohái dān* – Silently circulating the energy of the five phases is also called establishing minor elixir circulation.

Mysterious Orifice 玄窍 *Xuánqiào* – Chapter 1 of the *Taiyi jinhua zongzhi* has Lü Dongbin say that the Heavenly Heart indicates the three points of the three-dot opening. Also described as the Mysterious Opening, it is present as a third eye in everyone.

Natural Ways of Exchanging *Qi* 自然换氣 *Zìrán huànqì* – This is a fundamental method to absorb *qi*. In ancient times, it was known as the natural method of absorbing *qi*. It is a Daoist practice to exchange body energy of the self with that of the universe in oneness.

Niwan 泥丸 – Upper field. Located on the inner nature line, three inches (*cun*) from the Heavenly Eye point.

Official of the Hall of Light 明堂官 *Míngtáng guān* – When a person is born, there is a vertical gap in front of the forehead, the frontal suture, with a different length for everyone. As people grow older, this eventually grows together. However in-between, there is an acupuncture point and thus it was called "cavity" in the old days. Called traditionally the Hall of Light, is one inch inside the head.

Orifice 穴 *Xué* – A location that can be thought of as an opening or an aperture. Commonly translated as acupuncture point, gateway, hole, cave, or cavern. Its forms a passageway between the human body and the universe.

Orifice of Brightness 明窍 *Míngqiào* – The eyes, ears, nostrils, plus the mouth are the seven upper orifices. In addition, there are the front and rear genitals, i.e., the bottom orifices, plus the navel in the middle. This makes a total of ten. These can be considered sense doors or openings to the external universe.

Original Energy 本体能量 *Běntǐ néngliàng* – Present in the physical body, this comes from the joining of the semen of the father and the blood (egg) of the mother. However, it is not the same as mere physical body energy, because the physical body only exists from birth to death, is temporary and impermanent. Daoists believe that original energy is essentially unrelated to the physical body and that, as long as we know of a person, his original energy continues.

Perfect *Qi* 真氣 *Zhēnqì* – Stem *qi* is *qi* created from nonbeing and manifests in the body's energy flow. Moving around the internal levels of the body, it is invisible and intangible to ordinary people, however, it has form and consists of particles that can be measured by instruments. This is what people talk about as perfect *qi*. A skillful practitioner can see, feel, and touch it. As we inhale and exhale cosmic *qi,* what is left in the body is stem *qi,* the source of perfect *qi*.

Perineum 会阴 *Huìyīn* – Also known as Meeting Yin, located at REN1.

Postnatal 后天 *Hòutiān* – As long as we live, breathe, and take nourishment (postnatal nutrition), the body exists. Anytime we are doing things, therefore, we are in a postnatal state. After death, corpses do not change, speak, or act, and that, too, is part of being postnatal, of resting in a postnatal state. Thus, our cultivation, too, is postnatal, a way of expressing our desire to move toward the prenatal. We want to refine prenatal being, but we cannot do so because we do not know what the realm of emptiness and nonbeing looks like, what prenatal being really is. The only things we can express in words are postnatal.

Postnatal Mirror 后天镜 *Hòutiān jìng* – Located in the center of the brain, between the cerebellum and the midbrain, concealed in a small crack, its shape is like that of an inclined plan. Connecting to the spinal cord, it is where the prenatal and postnatal existence connect, where the spirit light of the body links to that of heaven. Thus, it is also called "heaven."

Prenatal 先天 *Xiāntiān* – The realm of emptiness and nonbeing; the circumstances before birth.

Primordial *Qi* 元之氣 *Yuánzhī qì* – This is cosmic energy also known as base *qi*. It is what you breathe into the body and is the common understanding for *qi*. It Chinese character is 氣.

Primordial Spirit 元神 *Yuánshén* – While we are present in the physical body, we manifest spirit in both its yin and yang forms, gaining life force from both. Primordial spirit, then, is the adhesive or the catalyst that holds together and supports the other spirit dimensions. Primordial spirit exists on the line between yin and yang. Beyond intention and awareness, we have no control over it. It supervises our unconscious functioning. It is eternal and ubiquitous: nothing does not have it.

Reflection Line 反射线 *Fǎnshè xiàn* – This indicates the connection between Hundred Meeting (Baihui; GV20) at the top of the head and Meeting Yin (Huiyin; CV1) at the perineum. It is the body's *zìwu* line. In medicine, it is called the Thrusting Vessel.

Small Heavenly Circuit 小周天 *Xiǎozhōu tiān* – The moon rotates around the earth, completing one cycle in one month. The human body matches the moon, making it possible to open the Governing and Conception Vessels. This is called the small heavenly circuit (microcosmic orbit).

Spirit 神 *Shén* – Sometimes translated as soul or mind. While we are present in the physical body, we manifest spirit in both its yin and yang forms, gaining life force from both. Primordial spirit is the adhesive or the catalyst that holds together and supports the oter spirit dimensions. As long as people are alive, spirit is present within them. Even the dead still have the three kinds of spirit, at least as long the corpse is still there and has not yet been cremated. In fact, they are the most balanced here.

Spirit Light 神光 *Shénguāng* – Spirit light, the manifestation of primordial spirit, is the life force of the body. In antiquity, highly evolved masters were

utterly full of spirit. Primordial spirit firmly returned to their body, resting beyond yet encompassing their life force, which they never allowed to leave. Daoists believe that spirit light is "the light of life and the brightness of death." To find this, they think it is necessary to refine the Mysterious Pass. To do so, they must open the Heavenly Eye. This is called "seeing one's nature with an enlightened mind." And for this, one must first see spirit light first, the visible manifestation of the life force in the human body.

Spirit Soul 魂 *Hún* – The liver and gallbladder house the spirit soul, which promotes life. It resides at the center of heaven, is yang in nature, and consists of light clear *qi*. It comes from supreme emptiness and shares its appearance with primordial beginning.

Stem *Qi* 炁 *Qi* – See Perfect *qi*.

Strength Line 壮力线 *Zhuànglì xiàn* – This connects the center of the chest (xiphoid process) with the Upper Narrows (T-11). Used to strengthen the tendons in the body, it is mainly activated in the practice of hard qigong and external fighting. When cultivating the internal lines, there is no need to work on it right away. Rather focus on energizing the inner nature and destiny-cultivation lines above and below it.

Three Immortals Practice 三仙功 *Sānxiān gong* – Part of a multitude of Daoist cultivation techniques that refine perfection. Today we speak of it as the prime cultivation method of the *Lingbao bifa*, used by the eminent immortals of old, Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, in cultivating the elixir. Many masters have practiced the technique and written classical masterpieces about it. They elaborated the particular techniques of elixir cultivation in various ways, but in their basic theory they always went back to the *Lingbao bifa*.

Transmitted Energy 转世能量 *Zhuǎnshì néngliàng* – Also called inherited or reincarnated energy, this is today called genetic energy. Daoists believe that the genes account only for a very small part of the larger complex and insist that we are all joined together by transmitted energy. The space around us consists of things that are older than us and there is something in this murkiness that can tell us many things about a lot of changes. This gives rise to transmitted energy.

Twelve-storied Tower 十二重楼 *Shí'èr chóng lóu* – Located on the broken line. The second break in this line is in the throat area, which divides into twelve segments, traditionally known as the Twelve-storied Tower.

Upper Field 上田 *Shàngtián* – Also called Niwan Palace and by various other names. Here primordial spirit is stored. Located at the intersection of the inner nature and broken lines, it is the cavity that receives cosmic energy and tends toward high pressure.

Upper Narrows 夹脊 *Jiājí* – Located on the strength line, straight up from the seven joints (T-11) and between the two kidneys.

Valley of the Spirit 神之谷 *Shénzhī gǔ* – The *Daodė jing* speaks of the "spirit valley [grain]," noting that it "does not die" (ch. 6). Located where primordial spirit appears, which is stored in the upper field.

Yang Spirit 阳神 *Yángshén* – Yang spirit manifests when we are mentally clear and fully awake and helps us control our original energy. It can emerge from the body, is both related to and not related to it. It can also exert control over the body, for example, in urination and defecation.

Yellow Court Palace 黄庭宫 *Huángtíng gong* – Another name for the middle field.

Yin Spirit 阴神 *Yīnshén* – This manifests when a scene appears in our mind without conscious effort, thinking, or intention. It can be amazing or scary. It rests in the sphere beyond the Great Ultimate, an area that looks much like a big mouth.

Index

abdomen: brain in, 61-64, 355; pressure of, 57-62, 68, 72, 81, 108
acupuncture points, 30-31, 33, 117, 203, 253, 334, 406-09
ancestors, 3-4, 39, 40-41, 78, 102, 185, 245, 315, 383, 386
Ancestral Orifice, 23-25, 40, 45, 72, 94, 97, 109, 121, 189-92, 240, 251-52, 264, 267, 270-72, 275, 277, 281, 288, 292, 296-97, 301, 303, 306-09, 311-16, 319-22, 324-25, 403
attracting immortality, 19, 73, 76, 174, 224, 227, 232, 241, 245, 250, 288, 293, 329, 333, 371, 374, 389, 392, 402; explanation of, 223-50; methods of, 179-222;
Bai Yuchan, 11, 14-15, 90, 242
bladder, 31, 117, 136, 148, 153, 157, 165, 171, 193, 205, 208, 219, 222, 241, 249, 260, 264, 267-68, 283, 292, 300, 325-46, 353, 356-66, 377, 389, 396, 397, 403
body, 37-39, 42-45, 47-49, 51-52, 58, 73, 103, 243, 309, 355, 404, 400-11
body fluids, 224, 338, 341, 342, 344, 353
brain: abdominal, 62, 65, 111, 128, 235, 359, 381; center of, 32, 229-31, 245, 409; function of, 445
breathing: embryo, 21, 25, 38, 103, 121, 212-13, 392, 400; forms of, 71-77; holding, 48, 72, 75, 112, 114-16, 120, 186-89, 253, 332, 362; natural:, 72, 100, 140, 151-53, 208, 212, 255-59, 263, 269, 279-86, 333, 375-80; through pores, 40, 47, 63-65, 70, 73-76, 91, 98, 108-11, 113-17, 144-45, 151-55, 166, 171-72, 185, 195-99, 204-08, 211, 233-40, 245-47, 254-63, 269-70, 279, 282-285, 290-91, 302, 309-10, 336, 375-82, 402; steadying of, 72, 75-76, 112, 137-38, 142-44, 183, 188, 191-94, 204-21, 234-39, 244-48, 253-61, 278-80
Bubbling Creek, 30
Bubbling Spring, 102, 156, 186, 217, 230, 300
Buddhism, 3-5, 11, 16-17, 57, 78-79, 86, 96, 104, 225-26, 294-95, 307
Cao Wenyi, 392
cauldron, 25, 32, 47, 95, 107-12, 193, 209-14, 221, 224, 234, 252, 263, 278, 280, 290, 302, 304, 325, 389, 392-98, 403, 408
cavern, 76, 80, 214, 408
Cavern Chamber, 32, 403
Cavity of *Qi*, 25- 24, 31, 192, 234, 245, 252, 276-77, 281, 298-301, 313, 317, 372
Center Chest, 46, 158, 371
Central Palace, 65, 93, 120-21, 140-42, 145, 220, 230-32, 240-41, 381
Chang qingjing jing, 62
chanting, 8-9, 18, 35, 52, 137, 139,-44, 215, 218, 305, 362, 366
chaoyuan, *see* moving to the prime
Chaozhen dong, 81
Chen Chuxin, 15
Chen Nan, 11, 14
Chen Tuan, 11, 14, 325
Christianity, 3, 15, 305
Clarity and Subtlety school, 10-11
colors: 16, 58, 153, 214, 247, 316, 404; five, 136, 143, 165, 323, 339, 344, 34, 357,
Complete Perfection school, 1-14, 20, 24, 176, 252, 369, 400
Confucianism, 3, 10, 33, 41
Crown Gate, 23, 32, 72, 229, 232, 260-63, 276, 290, 368, 376, 380, 382, 388, 403-06
Dacheng tiyao, 298
Dadan zhizhi, 77, 202, 239, 308
Daode jing, 4, 42, 47, 49, 61, 75, 87-89, 95-98, 212, 226, 304, 315-16, 357, 359, 385, 411
death: after, 3-4, 49-51, 54-55, 78-79, 161-62, 186, 409; brightness of, 54-56, 410; life and, 19, 27, 30, 58, 79, 91, 149, 208, 210, 218, 225, 229, 241, 297, 321, 368-74.

desire, 7, 16, 50, 52, 57, 62, 70, 72, 79, 101, 214, 216, 233, 294, 368, 369, 384, 389, 391, 409
Dipper: 26, 37, 41, 81, 138, 140, 141, 299, 304, 307, 308, 320, 409; seven stars of, 26, 28, 48, 81, 97, 138-42, 146-47, 153, 183
diseases, 19, 27-30, 37-39, 47, 61, 67, 92, 112, 114, 119-21, 136-37, 149, 153-57, 161, 329, 341, 348, 360, 362
Divine Empyrean school, 10-11
DNA, 37-38
dragon and tiger, 2, 21-22, 315, 400-01
Dragon Gate lineage, 1-17, 20, 392, 401
dragon pearl, 24, 252
dual cultivation, 8, 12, 16, 18, 23, 147, 175, 182, 392; school, 11-12, 14
eight trigrams, 25-26, 35, 95, 100, 102, 110, 134-35, 141-44, 182, 348, 354, 361
elixir: fields, 30, 37, 39, 48, 68, 246, 266, 294, 295, 310, 312, 356-57, 408; forms of, 105-09; practice of, 20-25, 32, 35-36, 47, 107-11, 184, 216, 224, 245, 253, 259, 273, 278-89, 293-94, 303, 308, 311, 315, 338, 394, 401, 409, 411; procedures of, 109-11
elixir circulation, 21-22, 31, 36, 107, 110, 190, 195, 215, 232, 242-44, 283-84, 293, 319, 324-25, 336, 348, 355, 361-62, 367, 399, 401, 408; major, 22; minor, 22, 287, 356, 412
emotions, 5, 47, 49, 53, 57-60, 64, 107, 195, 206-07, 226, 240, 250, 310, 359, 385, 386, 406
energy: balancing, 19, 27, 48, 123-37; cosmic, 26, 40-47, 74, 77, 87-88, 91, 95, 118, 234-40, 246, 292, 306, 323, 403, 409, 411; original, 39-48, 68-69, 95, 100, 133, 232, 305, 366, 385-86, 403, 408, 411; transmitted, 39-48, 61, 102, 239-42, 316, 325-27, 381, 385-86, 410
exchanging *qi* with nature, 27, 40, 47, 75, 91, 95, 99, 112, 113, 115, 118-22, 173, 247
external alchemy, 105, 110, 223, 281, 403
Fanghu waishi, 12
fasting, 28, 43, 86-99, 300, 370
Fengdao kejie, 6
five emperors, 61-62
five organs, 27, 36, 64, 88, 94-95, 99, 109, 116019, 136, 147, 158, 160, 166, 169, 180, 187, 196, 216, 226, 289, 321, 325-66, 402, 405
five phases: alignment of, 326-38; circulation of, 38, 41, 66, 94, 108, 139, 148, 150, 154, 166-67, 173, 183, 197-98, 201, 218, 219-25, 234, 242, 245, 251, 266, 269, 271, 293, 300, 319, 320, 323, 355, 362-63, 372-73, 388, 397; and organs, 338-46; harmony of, 95; *qi* of, 81, 94, 108, 129, 269, 270, 285, 293, 294, 299, 305, 320, 321, 322, 324, 337, 357, 371, 373; structure of, 347-53; table of, 136, 345, 349-51; transformation of, 24, 253, 397
Flowery Pond, 31, 405, 407
flying the gold crystal, 20, 22, 36, 332, 367, 400
four areas, 29, 34, 177
front genitalia, 33, 278, 332-5, 343, 345, 403
furnace, 21-23, 30, 94, 105-11, 184, 194, 202, 211, 213, 220, 223-24, 234, 252, 262-63, 278-84, 288, 290, 301, 303, 324, 336, 357, 399, 400, 403, 405
gallbladder, 64, 100, 113-114, 136, 153, 158-59, 163, 170-73, 218, 326, 328, 331-32, 340-44, 355-56, 377, 410
Gate of Destiny, 117, 149-50, 300-01, 342, 405
Ge Xuan, 10
Golden Flower, 15-22, 61, 295, 311, 401
golden fluid, 21-22, 195, 242, 348, 362, 367, 399, 401
Great One, 15, 299, 303, 308, 321
Great Peace school, 9
Great Ultimate, 48, 84, 143, 238, 316, 318, 404
Hall of Light, 32, 65, 408
Hall of Yin, 16
hand gestures, 84-85, 93, 127, 190-91, 239, 292, 361, 389, 394-98
Hao Datong, 11, 14-15
health, 9, 18, 27, 38, 49, 61, 92, 94, 136, 148, 154-57, 160, 167, 337, 358
hearing: ears, 49, 51, 55-58, 63, 66-69, 73, 91, 106, 184, 187-91, 199, 201, 207-14, 219, 224, 233-37, 244, 249, 255, 259-61, 287, 331, 333, 342-47, 350, 364,

376, 377, 404, 408; no , 51, 184, 199, 203; reverse 53, 74, 189, 227, 252, 346
heart: beat, 63, 69-70, 81, 199, 204-10, 226, 237, 376, 379, 380; not beyond, 73, 77, 137, 148, 208, 211-13, 263, 267, 278; fire, 204, 220, 360, 364; of heaven, 201, 208, 213, 221; and mind, 8, 19-22, 24, 46, 69-70, 83, 91, 95, 118, 152, 170, 177, 184-96, 199, 203, 207-10, 214, 217-22, 227, 230, 239, 248, 252, 258, 260, 284, 310, 316, 323, 372, 393-99; organ of, 77, 91, 207
heaven: and earth, 35, 63, 73, 76, 79-83, 89, 94, 109, 112, 122, 134-35, 180-81, 185, 191, 198, 200, 204, 207, 209-10, 219-21, 236, 239, 247, 311, 316-17, 360, 398, 400; and humanity, 25-26, 102, 120, 144, 162-63, 169, 293, 337, 355, 369, 390
heavenly circuit, 20, 34-37, 90, 129, 162, 166-68, 191, 195, 205, 213, 215, 292, 300, 325, 332, 355, 367-68, 373, 405, 407, 409
Heavenly Eye, 25, 16, 23-24, 28, 32-36, 45, 54, 56, 96-97, 145, 175, 177, 213, 223, 230, 251-52, 264-66, 270-76, 280, 292, 296-98, 302, 305, 317-18, 323-24, 333, 360, 364, 369, 375, 385, 388, 403, 406-410
Heavenly Masters school, 7-11
Heavenly Net, 53, 134, 137-41, 144, 199, 274, 302, 391, 408
heavenly stems, 84, 162, 178, 218, 331-32, 348-50, 398; as Dipper, 32, 408
Hetu, 100, 144, 182
hexagrams, 229-32, 387, 390
Highest Clarity school, 9-10
Huang Chuping, 80
Huang Dongyuan, 80
Huang Shouzhong, 11
Huangdi neijing, 4, 43, 47, 64, 66, 89, 99, 179, 189, 314, 343, 355, 358
Huangting jing, 69, 356, 374
Hundred Meeting, 33, 149, 177, 228-31, 255, 258-61, 265-66, 273, 296, 367, 375, 379, 381, 387, 403, 406, 409
immortal embryo, 21-22, 393, 400,-01
immortals, 2, 6, 18, 20, 27, 34, 57, 77, 78, 303, 399, 410
ingredients, 49, 107-10, 190, 196, 224, 242, 251-52, 267, 277-79, 282-84, 292, 318-20, 336, 372
inner nature, 8, 15-18, 23, 28-31, 33-36, 50, 87, 118, 143-44, 147, 175, 177, 182-83, 217, 222-23, 228-31, 251-52, 265-66, 271-72, 292, 296-97, 317, 320, 357-58, 368, 398, 400, 403, 406-11
inner observation, 69, 104, 175, 285, 356, 366, 374, 378, 380-81, 390-91
inner spaces, 111, 254-58, 275, 290, 322, 376
intention ball exercises, 25-26, 95, 100, 102, 134, 143-44
intercourse, 54-55, 76, 180
internal alchemy, 9-16, 29, 82, 86, 94, 105, 109, 232, 291, 307, 357, 370, 386, 392, 394, 403
internal lines, 23, 32-34, 36, 178-89, 252, 348, 309, 411
intestines, 61, 69, 100, 326, 328, 339, 360, 377
jade fluid, 22, 361, 399, 401
Jade Pillow, 29-32, 37, 159, 224, 367, 368, 370, 406, 407
Jia Jiaoyi, 19
Jin'gao shu, 398
Jindan sibai zi, 300
Jingang jing, 311
Kan and Li, 21, 163, 169, 178, 193-95, 266, 300, 323, 399-400
karma, 43, 78, 384
kidneys: and earth, 220; essence in, 214; fluid of, 136; as generating organ, 49, 211-13, 241, 340, 353-54, 357, 369 372, 389; meridian, 67, 117, 347; *qi*, 180-81, 223, 226, 327, 329, 333, 345, 352, 363, 390
Kou Qianzhi, 6-7
Kun (trigram), 2, 24, 112, 141-42, 163, 167, 169, 182, 192, 209, 228-29, 232, 252, 269, 278, 298, 309, 371, 386, 400
Kun Palace, 24, 192, 228-29, 232, 252, 269, 278, 298, 310
Laozi, 4, 8, 41-42, 47, 71, 92, 101, 233, 236, 304, 315, 319, 383
lead, 22, 77, 107, 221, 320, 400, 402
Lengyan jing, 96
Li Daochun, 11-12, 14
Li Hanxu, 14

Li Xiyue, 12
life-destiny, 8, 16-18, 23, 29, 31-34, 36, 79, 87, 147, 175, 178, 182, 183, 189-90, 201, 211, 223, 251, 268, 308, 322, 337, 340, 404, 410
life force: in body, 33, 47-54; circulation of, 19; of directions, 16; guarding of, 24, 253; and spirit, 24, 183, 189, 229, 253, 368; techniques of, 27; use of 29, 314
light of life, 54-56, 305, 410
lineage, 1-17, 19, 21, 384, 400
ling, see life force
Lingbao bifa, 13, 15-16, 18-20, 23, 62, 70-71, 87, 90, 182-83, 193-195, 200, 222, 224, 227, 229, 232, 239, 246, 250-53, 289, 301, 312, 315, 317, 323, 355, 368, 392-94, 399, 400-03, 411
Lingfei jing, 374
Lingyuan dadao ge, 392
Liu Chuxuan, 1, 11, 14-15
Liu Haichan, 13, 15, 17
Liu Yongping, 15
Liu Yu, 10
Liu Yurong, 393
liver: 66-69, 86, 91, 100, 113-14, 136, 143, 148, 153, 158-65, 169-73, 180, 187, 195, 199, 201, 209, 214-18, 222, 248, 267-68, 282, 325-69, 377, 390, 396-97, 402, 405, 410; meridian, 66, 68, 345, 390
Louguantai, 118
Lü Dongbin, 9-20, 23, 28, 32, 49, 53, 71, 80, 87-91, 98, 101, 117-20, 134, 143, 166, 175, 185, 190-91, 213, 214-15, 218, 226-32, 235, 237, 241, 247, 251, 273, 301-03, 307, 309, 316, 318, 357, 360, 370, 374, 378, 383-89, 399, 406, 408, 410
Lu Xixing, 12, 14
Lu Xun, 44
Lü zushi sanni yishi shuoshu, 229
lunar florescence, 19, 163-69
lungs, 24, 58-60, 67-68, 73, 75, 117, 121, 136, 143, 153, 162-73, 191, 195, 199, 202, 214-15, 226, 267-68, 282, 290, 325-64, 376, 377-81, 396-97, 402, 405, 407
Luoshu, 100, 144, 182
Ma Danyang, 15, 17
Ma Yu, 1, 11
magical arts, 10, 28, 90, 185, 407
Magpie Bridge, 34, 36, 178, 406,07
material soul, 50-51, 61, 68, 163, 173, 193, 195, 199, 214, 331, 351, 352, 356, 407
meditation: 78-82; postures, 81-82, 105-05, 177, 184-85, 213, 252, 288; sitting, 5, 18-19, 25, 40, 45-46, 52, 63, 65, 69, 79, 82, 92-95, 100-04, 161, 177, 184-86, 190-93, 202, 210, 214, 223, 227, 239-41, 248, 253, 259-60, 264, 269, 282, 287, 290, 333
Meeting Valley, 68
Meeting Yin, 33, 107, 177, 183, 229, 232, 255, 263-66, 296, 332, 377, 387-88, 391, 403, 408-09
menstruation, 157, 161, 179, 181
mercury, 22, 59, 60-61, 77, 107, 111, 220, 319-20, 357, 362, 399, 401
meridians, 20, 25-26, 29, 35-38, 68, 82-90, 100-04, 117, 120, 129, 147-49, 154-60, 180, 183, 191, 210, 214, 226, 244, 300-01, 322, 328, 332, 341, 343, 346, 348, 353-55, 360, 370, 389-90, 395-97,407
midnight, 65, 69, 92-94, 122, 323, 372, 387-91
Milk Flow, 46, 371, 394-98
Mingdao ji, 1
Mount: Changde, 80; Fanghu, 12; Gezao, 10; Hua, 14; Ji, 133; Jinhua, 79-80; Jinshan, 11; Jinxing, 81; Jizu, 11; Kongtong, 118; Lao, 11; Longhu, 10; Wudang, 10, 13; Zhongnan, 117-18
moving to the prime, 22, 25, 61-62, 95, 200-02, 210, 357-60, 401
mysterious female, 88-89, 93
Neigong fu, 98
Neigong shu, 18-34, 82-83, 112, 115-20, 123, 129, 133, 147, 152, 155, 175, 252, 392
Neijing tu, 273
nine palaces, 23-27, 134-35, 145, 152, 181-82, 226, 301, 305-06, 316, 381, 388, 400
Niwan, 31-33, 226, 231, 264, 276, 298-303, 307, 309, 317, 392, 404, 406, 408, 411
Niwan Li zushi nüzong shuanxiu baofa, 392
Nüdan xinfa, 392-93
Nügong neidan cidi shi, 392

numbers, 5, 11, 16, 38, 63, 67, 69, 80, 90, 94, 147, 168, 179-82, 201, 230, 232, 363, 368-69
Numinous Treasure school, 9-10, 13, 18, 398, 399
Ocean of Blood, 394
Ocean of Marrow, 229, 342
Ocean of *Qi*, 31, 157, 341, 394, 404, 407
oneness, 9, 21, 24, 27, 35, 47-50, 89, 112, 118-19, 144, 182, 223-24, 229-32, 252, 283, 293, 308, 354, 369, 400, 406, 408
Orthodox Unity school, 7-9
Pace of Yu, 137-40
Panxi ji, 1
parents, 5, 38-44, 46, 49-55, 78, 105, 240, 383-87
patriarchs, 13,-16, 23, 48, 52, 54, 96, 163, 169, 404
Peng Si, 15
pericardium, 63-65, 69-70, 117, 304
perineum, 33-34, 103-04, 107, 177-78, 203, 208, 214, 227-28, 240, 257-59, 263, 266, 278, 286, 334-35, 344, 387, 403, 407-09
pitches, 349, 358-59
Plain Woman, 25, 393
planets, 35, 40, 42, 315
poems, 2, 35, 80, 400
Postnatal Mirror, 32, 34, 177, 264-65, 275, 298, 409
prenatal state, 78- 82, 90, 106
pulse, 63, 66-69, 179, 219, 327, 332, 345
Purity and Light school, 10-11
qi: cosmic, 98-02, 118, 120, 129-33, 148, 152-53, 167-70, 173, 183, 203, 235-36, 367, 370, 372, 380, 388, 409; forms of, 98-102; fire, 101-02; stem, 27, 74, 87-94, 98-102, 109-10, 118-20, 129-33, 137-40, 145-51, 162, 165-74, 178, 183, 203, 206, 208, 211-27, 232-43, 251-52, 258-69, 273-99, 303-08, 318, 325, 367, 407, 409; of yin and yang, 107, 109, 235, 284, 291, 318, 372
Qian (trigram), 2, 50, 111, 140-42, 163, 167, 169, 182, 208-09, 229, 231, 316, 371, 400
Qibo, 179-80, 358
Qimen dunjia, 134, 162, 167
Qinghua miwen, 242
Qingjing jing, 53, 61, 109, 160, 196-98, 200, 210, 236, 270, 365
Qiu Chuji, 1-2, 11, 13, 15, 20, 308, 320, 357, 378, 399
Qu Baiting, 80
recluses, 6-7, 80, 110, 229, 386
red dragon, 25, 357, 393
retreats, 26-27, 43, 86-87, 95-96, 142, 366, 382, 399
reverting essence to nourish the brain, 22, 326, 369, 389
River Carriage, 22, 30, 370, 401-02
Sa Shoujian, 11
saliva, 347-50, 375, 379
samadhi, 218-21
Sanche mizhi, 12
Santian mifa, 134
science, 4, 8, 37, 40, 44-45, 186, 296, 313, 322
seeing: contain, 206, 208, 210, 214, 227; inward, 53, 72-74, 206, 225-46, 251-65, 270-89, 295, 307, 316, 335, 336, 375; no 185, 201, 205, 209
senses, 5, 19, 57-58, 115, 188, 198, 210, 218, 221, 225-30, 249, 277, 357
Seven Perfected, 11-16, 20, 185
Shang Yan, 393
Shanghan lun, 68
Shi Tai, 11, 14
Shi Xingling, 15
Shuanglong dong, 80-82
Six Jia, 139-40
sleep practice, 18, 27-28, 85, 155-61
solar essence, 19, 163, 170-75
spirit: conscious, 48-53, 74, 87-88, 92, 225, 231, 234, 238, 242, 245-49, 254, 256, 274, 290, 294, 299, 303, 312, 320, 367, 369, 380; Gate, 70; light, 24-25, 32-34, 54-57, 97, 113, 115, 120, 148, 152, 155-59, 164, 177, 183, 190-91, 206, 225, 227, 252, 264-83, 292, 295-319, 326, 328, 335-36, 372, 384, 387, 393, 405, 409, 410; primordial, 31-32, 45, 48-55, 74, 87-88, 92, 187, 214-17, 220, 225, 231, 238, 241, 246, 249, 254-56, 274, 294, 303, 312, 320, 380, 410, 411; of the valley, 88-89, 92, 358
spirit soul, 50-51, 61, 68, 105, 163, 173, 187, 193, 195, 199, 214, 331, 351, 352, 410

spleen, 67-68, 113-14, 136, 153, 159-60, 165, 195, 199, 202, 210, 214-15, 282, 328-31, 334-40, 343-51, 356-57, 361-65, 377, 390, 396, 405
standing practice, 152-54
sun and moon, 24-26, 32-33, 49, 54-55, 96-97, 134-35, 162, 167-68, 173, 200, 230, 247, 252, 270-71, 274, 276, 280, 296-97, 302, 308, 315, 317, 404, 406
Sun Bu'er, 11, 14-15, 392
Sun Xuanqing, 11
Sunü jing, 25
Taiji diagram, 48, 108, 137, 145, 168, 182, 185, 238, 291, 325, 354, 363, 372
Tail Gate, 29
Taixiao langshu jing, 6
Taiyi jinhua zongzhi, 9, 15, 18, 23-24, 28, 32, 45, 50, 53-57, 62, 96-97, 176, 188, 204, 224-i225, 230, 238, 239, 252-325, 356, 367-68, 388, 392, 409
Tan Chuduan, 11, 14-15
Tan Chuxuan, 1
Tang liudian, 6
Tao Hongjing, 10
Taochuan xianyin, 80
Taohua yuan, 80
teachers, 16, 40-41, 52, 185, 382-86
three barriers, 29, 31, 36, 177, 370
three centers, 47, 63-66, 69, 71, 74, 77, 81, 82, 109-11, 224, 246
three energies, 39, 42-47, 87, 99, 239, 403
three fields, 33, 62, 73, 177, 192, 277, 299, 303, 366, 368, 378, 388
Three Immortals, 18-25, 113-14, 178, 181-83, 193-95, 199, 220-21, 249, 251, 354, 393, 398-400, 410
three spaces, 61-62, 65, 72, 106, 236-37, 240, 254, 256, 291
Three Worlds, 2, 7, 17, 54, 57, 87, 307
time: 20, 26, 35, 43, 69, 72, 107, 123, 164-65, 169-70, 175, 194, 197, 302, 326-28, 355, 370, 372, 388, 391, 407; *mao* hour, 20, 35, 69, 162, 164, 168, 195, 300, 325, 354, 355, 369, 390, 399, 405; *zi* hour, 69, 93, 94, 121, 164, 243, 354, 369, 372, 387-90
Tong Min, 393,
tree practice, 123-37
Twelve-storied Tower, 34, 36, 117, 178, 212-13, 224, 259, 299, 301, 326, 379, 410
upper field, 31, 65, 76, 226, 230, 276, 294, 299, 305-06, 323, 366, 408, 411
Upper Narrows, 29, 30, 33, 367-70, 410-11
upper palate, 30, 34, 36, 123-29, 137, 143, 148-52, 155-59, 165, 170-71, 177, 184, 188-90, 202, 209, 224-25, 253, 260, 268-69, 285, 348, 350, 364, 368, 374, 407
upper space, 58, 72-73, 190, 192, 234, 238, 273
vehicles, 12, 27-29, 103, 120, 134-35, 152, 162, 175, 180-81, 367, 399
vessels: 20, 25-26, 29, 35-37, 64, 83, 100, 147-51, 173, 226, 244, 301, 337, 343-46, 355, 389, 407; Conception, Governing: 20, 24, 36-37, 121, 150, 156-58, 160, 167, 191-92, 212, 235, 292, 345, 368-69, 391, 407, 409; extraordinary, 35- 36, 100, 147, 301, 355; opening of, 148-52
vision: inward, 53, 71-73, 204, 224-69, 276-94, 306, 314, 333-35, 374; reverse, 27, 78, 167, 174, 184, 205-18
Wanfa guizong, 134, 167
Wang Chongyang, 1, 11, 13-15, 20, 23, 55, 67-68, 77, 89, 91, 101, 185, 238, 250-51, 324, 325, 350, 368, 399
Wang Chuyi, 11, 14-15
Wang Jiaoming, 19
Wang Liping, 391, 393
Wang Shaoyang, 13, 15
Wang Taixin, 80
Wang Wenqing, 11
water and fire, 20-21, 24, 35, 202, 220, 325, 340, 365, 400, 405
Wei Huacun, 10, 374
wisdom and potential, 18-19, 23, 29, 114, 136, 152, 175, 178, 182, 201-02, 251, 328, 393
women: xfws19, 23, 180-82, 239-40, 251, 288, 314, 324, 325, 392, 394; alchemy of, 19, 23, 181, 240, 251, 288, 314, 323-24, 392, 393, 394
Wuji, 19, 27, 133, 143, 151-54, 164, 181-84, 202
Wupian lingwen, 51, 54-55, 77, 250, 308

Xiaojing wei, 316
Xiuzhen tu, 41, 57, 73, 78, 96, 184, 308, 312, 325, 356, 371, 406
Xiwangmu nüxiu zhengtu shize, 392
Xiyou ji, 2
Xu Xun, 10
Xuanguan xian milun, 242
Xue Daoguang, 11, 14-15
Xukong tu, 62
Xuwu tu, 62, 203
yang: fire, 108, 182, 205, 220, 240, 292, 324, 367-73; perfect, 50, 94, 107, 218, 220, 225, 228, 232, 243, 301, 318, 373, 386-87, 391; spirit, 22, 25, 28, 33, 53, 87, 90, 175, 185, 216-17, 228, 251, 320, 366, 393, 401
Yellow Court, 31, 65, 69, 240, 299, 365, 374, 381, 408, 411
Yellow Emperor, 4, 47, 62, 65, 95, 298, 359
Yijing, 5-6, 47, 110, 182, 316, 371
yin: impact, 367-73; orifices, 36, 99, 103, 106, 177, 183, 189, 193, 214, 245, 368, 378, 396; perfect 218, 220; spirit, 90, 175, 185, 217, 228; within yang, 83, 93-94, 108, 163, 168-69, 181, 228, 301, 314, 340, 388, 398
yin and yang: balance of, 29, 118, 163; cultivation of, 21, 404; flow of, 28; guiding, 133; harmony of, 162; interaction of, 58, 232; intersecting, 206; manifest, 83; matching, 82, 203; merging, 282; pairing of, 21, 401; *qi* of 107, 109, 235, 284, 291, 318, 372; steadying, 162; uniting, 22, 400
Yingguan jing, 311
Yiwei, 316
Yu, 137
Yuanjun fayu, 392
Yushu lu, 398
Zhang Boduan, 11, 13-15,
Zhang Daoling, 7, 10
Zhang Hedao, 19
Zhang Liang, 7
Zhang Lu, 10
Zhang Sanfeng, 12-14, 86-90
Zhang Zhongjing, 68
Zhang Ziyang, 13, 41, 87, 242, 250, 320
Zhao Dezhi, 393
Zhao Guirong, 393
Zhenyuan yi, 398
Zhong-Lü chuandao ji, 49, 226, 370
Zhong-Lü school, 9-10, 14, 17,
Zhongli Quan, 9, 13-15, 18, 20, 398-99, 410
Zhouyi cantong qi, 110, 369
Zhuangzi, 243
Zhuge Liang, 7
Zhuzhen zongpai congbo, 12
Zu Shu, 10